

6 **NATION**

- BJP welcomes govt takeover of 200 schools affiliated to banned Jel in Kashmir
- UP CM calls judiciary protector of good governance, announces ₹ 50 crore fund
- Khandu reaffirms inclusive development as govt's core priority
- Tripura Congress alleges BJP exploiting tribals' rights

NORTHEAST



We have certain red lines: EAM Jaishankar on negotiations for trade deal with US



NEW DELHI, Aug 23 India has certain 'red lines' in its negotiations for a trade deal with the US and it will stand firm in protecting the interests of farmers and small producers, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday, days before additional American tariffs on Indian goods are set to come into effect.

Jaishankar also sounded critical of the US for targeting New Delhi's energy ties with Moscow and wondered why the same yardstick has not been applied to China and the European Union, the largest im-

porter of Russian crude oil and Russian LNG, respectively.

The external affairs minister, speaking at the Economic Times World Leaders Forum, also made it clear that India does not accept mediation in its relations with Pakistan and there has been a national consensus over it for more than 50 years.

His comments came in the face of President Donald Trump's repeated claims that he defused the India-Pakistan military conflict in May.

Jaishankar flagged trade and tar-

iff, procurement of Russian crude oil and Washington's assertion on the conflict as the three main issues India has with the US at present.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington are on a downturn after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent, including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

The 25 per cent tariff has already come into effect and additional levies are due from August 27.

Jaishankar said that US President Trump's way of dealing with the world is a very major departure from the traditional way of doing so and the entire world is facing this issue.

"We've not had a US President who has conducted foreign policy as publicly as the current one. That itself is a departure that's not limited to India," he said.

The external affairs minister said trade is 'really the major issue' between the two countries, adding India has certain 'red lines' and that the negotiations for the proposed trade are underway. 'We as the government are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta spikes Jamiat's resignation demand

Congress is the 'B Team' of Jamiat, says Assam CM

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that he does not care about the demand of Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind for his resignation following the eviction drive in various parts of the state and to book him under hate speech laws.

Sarma also said that if he gets Jamiat President Mahmood Madani, he would send the Islamic scholar to Bangladesh.

Founded in 1919, Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind is considered the largest and most influential organisation of Indian Muslims.

"I am officially showing my 'burha anguli' (thumb) to them. There is Assamese blood, strength and courage in this thumb of mine. I don't care about what they demand," Sarma told the media on the sidelines of a programme in Morigaon.

The Jamiat's Working Committee in a meeting, chaired by



Madani, on Wednesday expressed alarm over the eviction drives in Assam that have rendered more than 50,000 families homeless, mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims.

Adopting a resolution, the organisation called upon India's con-

stitutional authorities—particularly the President of India and the Chief Justice of India—to immediately remove the chief minister of Assam and initiate criminal proceedings against him for hate speech.

"It is the people of Assam who will take the decision and not Jamiat President Mahmood Madani... If I get Madani, I will send him to Bangladesh. I will only say one thing that I don't care about Jamiat at all or anyone else," Sarma said.

He also described the Congress as the 'B Team' of Jamiat.

If anyone attacks Assam's chief minister, belonging to whichever party including Congress, "we would protest as the people of the state elected him and not the Jamiat," he said.

The Congress, however, did not give a single statement on this, the BJP leader said, adding that when a semiconductor facility came up in Jagiroad, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's son had protested and members of the Assam Congress echoed him.

"The Congress leaders in the state are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Deshi community pledges to protect land in Dhubri

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Aug 23: A meeting of the Deshi Janagosthiya Mancha, Assam, Dhubri District Committee, was held at Madhusaalmari village in Gauripur, where hundreds of indigenous Deshi people gathered to raise their concerns and demands regarding land conservation.

The meeting reflected the community's growing apprehension over the possible loss of ancestral land, which they fear would also lead to the erosion of their identity.

Community leaders stressed the belief that 'if there is no land, there is no caste.'

Speakers appealed to the people to refrain from selling their land to 'strangers,' referring to non-indigenous buyers seen as a threat to the demographic and cultural integrity of the Deshi community.

A key demand raised was for the Assam government to ban the sale of indigenous land to non-indigenous individuals.

The Mancha alleged that demographic changes are pushing the community towards extinction and called for immediate government intervention.

The gathering also criticised the government's anti-land drive, terming it a 'complete failure' and accusing it of failing to protect the land rights of indigenous communities.

In a strong statement, the Mancha labelled land brokers within the Deshi community as 'national enemies' and accused them of betraying their people for personal gain.

It warned of social ostracism and mob action against those facilitating land sales to outsiders.

The committee further demanded that land pattas (title deeds) be distributed to the Deshi community under the Basundhara scheme to provide legal security and prevent (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

FIR against journalists also names Satya Pal Malik, Pak media personality

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: The Guwahati Police, in its FIR against journalists Siddharth Vardarajan and Karan Thapar, also names former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik, who has since died, Pakistani media personality Najam Sethi and Indian media person Ashutosh Bharadwaj, along with "unknown persons".

The FIR, filed on May 9, by Guwahati resident Biju Verma alleged that in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor, online news platform 'The Wire' and some of its authors and editors published a series of articles and commentaries (between late April and early May 2025) that "prima facie undermine India's sovereignty and security, promote enmity and public disorder, and spread



misinformation".

The police had issued summons to Vardarajan and Thapar in connection with this case last week, directing them to appear before the Crime Branch on August 22, but the

Supreme Court on Friday gave them protection against "coercive action" by the police.

The Supreme Court had also granted protection to the two journalists earlier (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Three senior UPPL leaders quit party ahead of BTC polls

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 23: In a major political setback for the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) ahead of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, three senior leaders, including central secretary B o d d h a d e b Mushahary, resigned from the party on Saturday.

In Kokrajhar, Mushahary, considered a prominent face of

the UPPL in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), tendered his resignation to party president Pramod Boro. In his letter, he cited personal problems as the reason for stepping down from the primary membership as well as all organisational assign-

ments.

Mushahary had earlier contested the BTC elections twice from Debargaon constituency against former BTC chief and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) leader Hagrama Mohilary, losing narrowly on both occasions but gaining recognition as a strong grassroots politician.

He had also served as the founder secretary of the UPPL's Kokrajhar district committee and was chairman of the Debargaon TCLCC under the BTR government since 2020. In Gossaigaon, Anowar Husain, a member of the party's Central Working Committee and former AAMSU central leader, also resigned from the UPPL, citing personal reasons. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



Plantation along border with Nagaland postponed: Minister

GOLAGHAT, Aug 23: A plantation drive at Rengma Reserve Forest in Assam's Golaghat district, along the border with Nagaland, was postponed on Saturday after a decision was taken to wait for approval of the chief minister of the neighbouring state to carry out the exercise, officials said.

Two senior ministers from both states, along with top officials, held a discussion near the proposed plantation site and decided to pursue the next course of action jointly, they said.

The Assam delegation was led by Environment and Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, and the Nagaland team by Deputy Chief Minister Y Patton.

"Both evictions and plantations will continue. Today's plantation didn't take place as the deputy CM (of Nagaland) will have to apprise his chief minister about the planta-

tion exercise. He will take the chief minister's approval, and then the plantation drive will be conducted," Patowary told reporters.

The minister maintained that he had the necessary approval from the Assam chief minister and could have gone ahead with the plantation, but it was decided to undertake the drive together with Nagaland, as the neighbouring state was also agreeable to the idea.

Patton affirmed that the status quo will be maintained along the interstate border.

"We will maintain the status quo as per the court order. We are thankful to the Assam forest minister and government for removing the fencing and pillars erected here," he said, adding that evictions to clear encroachment will continue.

An official statement from the Golaghat district administration said the delegations from the two

states visited the Rengma Reserve Forest and subsequently held a meeting at Bidyapur Field in Uriamghat to discuss plantation-related issues along the interstate boundary.

They deliberated on the importance of ecological restoration, conservation of forest resources and fostering cooperation between the two states.

Both sides underscored the need for joint efforts to ensure that plantation activities are undertaken smoothly in the sensitive Rengma Reserve Forest area.

It was agreed that the plantation initiative would be formally undertaken after discussions between the chief ministers of Assam and Nagaland. Both governments reiterated their commitment to work together for the protection of forests and sustainable development in the border region, the statement said. Assam shares a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

One-horned rhino found dead in Pobitora

MORIGAON, Aug 22: The carcass of a one-horned rhinoceros was found in the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, officials said on Saturday.

The carcass was found by forest guards during patrolling near Tupling Camp on Friday evening, they said.

The horn of the rhinoceros was intact, they said, adding that it was suspected that the animal died of old age.

The horn has been collected for safe custody, an official said.

The post-mortem examination will reveal the actual cause of death, he said.

The 38.85-sq-km sanctuary, with grassland and wetland, has the highest density of rhinoceros. (PTI)

NATIONAL SPACE DAY

Deep space exploration next, prepare for it: Modi to scientists

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked space scientists to prepare for a deep space exploration mission to unravel the secrets that brighten the future of humanity.

In a video address on the National Space Day, Modi announced that India was preparing to set up a pool of astronauts for future missions and urged the youth to be part of this group.

"We have reached the moon and Mars. Now, we have to peek into deep space, where several secrets that would benefit the future of humanity lie hidden," Modi said.

Achieving one milestone after another in the space sector has now become a natural trait of India and its scientists, Modi said.

"Beyond galaxies lies our horizons. The endless universe tells us



that no frontier is the final frontier and in the space sector too, at the policy level, there should be no final frontier," the prime minister told a gathering of space scientists, students, and policymakers from across the country.

He said India was making advances in breakthrough technologies such as electric propulsion and semi-cryogenic engines.

"Soon, thanks to the hard work of you, scientists, India will launch the Gaganyaan mission and will

also build its own space station," he said.

The prime minister also asked the private players whether five startups can become unicorns in the next five years.

"I would like the private sector to come forward... can we reach a point where we can launch 50 rockets every year?" he asked space scientists and engineers.

Modi said his government possesses both the intent and the willpower to implement the next-generation reforms required to achieve this vision.

He said India viewed space technology not only as a tool for scientific exploration but also as a means to enhance ease of living.

"Space-tech is increasingly becoming an integral part of governance in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Gauhati univ research team get patent for plant-based formulation to address obesity

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: A team of four researchers of Gauhati University's Zoology department have secured a patent for a plant-based formulation to address obesity and its related complications.

The patent, numbered 569904, was officially granted on August 20 by the Indian Patent Office, a university release said on Saturday.

The patent protects a unique herbal combination of two widely known plants, Phyllanthus urinaria (traditionally used for urinary ailments) and Adhatoda vasica nees (valued for treating coughs and respiratory issues) and this marks the first reported use of these plants in combating obesity, the researchers said.

By blending equal portions of both plants and preparing an extract using a water and ethanol mix, the



researchers developed a novel therapeutic solution, they pointed out.

Laboratory trials on mice demonstrated promising outcomes, including reduced body fat, lower levels of harmful cholesterol such as triglycerides and LDL, and overall weight reduction.

This development opens new doors for safer, plant-based alternatives in managing obesity, offering a meaningful blend of ancient remedies with modern science, the researchers said. Researchers - Manas Das, Pritimoni Das, Pranjan Barman and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Postal services to US temporarily suspended amid lack of clarity on American customs rules

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Postal services to the US have been temporarily suspended, as US-bound air carriers have denied carrying shipments due to a lack of clarity in new norms issued by the American customs department, the Ministry of Communications said on Saturday.

However, services will continue for letters, documents and gift items worth up to USD 100.

Under an executive order issued by the US administration on July 30, 2025, goods valued at over USD 100 will be subject to customs duties in America with effect from August 29 onwards.

According to the order, transport carriers delivering shipments through the international postal network, or other "qualified parties" approved by the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), are required to collect and remit duties on postal shipments.

"While CBP issued certain guidelines on 15th August, 2025, several critical processes relating to the designation of 'qualified parties' and mechanisms for duty collection and remittance remain



undefined. "Consequently, US-bound air carriers have expressed their inability to accept postal consignments after 25th August, 2025, citing lack of operational and technical readiness," a statement from the ministry said.

Following the development, the "Department of Posts has decided to temporarily suspend booking of all types of postal articles", destined for the US with effect from August 25, 2025, except letters/documents and gift items up

to USD 100 in value, it said.

"These exempt categories will continue to be accepted and conveyed to the US, subject to further clarifications from CBP and USPS," the statement said.

The Department of Posts is offering refunds of postage to customers whose articles could not be dispatched.

"Customers who have already booked articles that cannot be dispatched to the USA due to these circumstances may seek a refund

of postage. The Department of Posts deeply regrets the inconvenience caused to customers and assures that all possible measures are being undertaken to resume full services to the USA at the earliest," the statement noted.

Economic think tank GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said under the new regime rolled out by the US, all inbound parcels will attract tariffs, but international postal shipments remain duty-free until US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) establishes a new entry process and publishes it.

After the implementation of new norms, shipments will face one of two duty structures -- ad valorem duty based on the effective tariff rate under IEEPA, or a flat rate duty of USD 80, USD 160, or USD 200 per item, depending on the country's tariff bracket.

"The suspension underscores the immediate fallout of Washington's new trade measures, which are expected to disrupt global e-commerce and hit exporters in India and other countries that depended on small-value, duty-free shipping," Srivastava said. (PTI)

CCPA slaps ₹ 3 lakh fine on VLCC for misleading ads on slimming treatments

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed ₹ 3 lakh fine on VLCC Ltd for publishing misleading advertisements related to slimming treatments.

In a statement on Saturday, the Department of Consumer Affairs said the penalty has been imposed on VLCC "for publishing misleading advertisements regarding fat-loss and slimming treatments through the use of the US-FDA approved CoolSculpting procedure/machine."

The department said the VLCC matter came into notice through a complaint and monitoring of ads in the beauty sector. "On examination, it was found that VLCC was making exaggerated claims of drastic weight loss and inch reduction within a single session, which went far beyond the actual approval granted to the CoolSculpting machine, thereby misleading consumers," the statement said.

During the investigation, CCPA found that VLCC's advertisements projected CoolSculpting and related procedures as a permanent weight-loss and size-reduction solution. CCPA imposed a penalty of Rs 3 lakh on VLCC and also issued certain advisories. The authority directed the company to strictly adhere to these advisories in future ads and disclaimers.

Sharing details on VLCC's misleading ads, CCPA said that some of the alleged claims are -- "Lose up to 600g and 7 cm in 1 session"; "Drop 1 Size in 1 session permanently"; "Drop one size in one hour"; and "VLCC brings you a ground-breaking fat reduction treatment".

CCPA said such ads are misleading and give consumers the false impression that CoolSculpting guarantees permanent and significant weight loss.

"In reality, the procedure is only approved for localized fat reduction in specific body areas and only for individuals with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 30 or less," the statement said. With respect to the US-FDA-approved CoolSculpting machine, CCPA

observed that the machine, manufactured by Zeltiq Aesthetics, is approved only for the reduction of localized fat bulges in areas such as the upper arm, bra fat, back fat, banana roll, submental area, thigh, abdomen, and flank.

Hence, it is not a weight-loss treatment.

"By omitting these critical facts, VLCC misled consumers in violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019," CCPA said, while imposing the penalty.

Going forward, CCPA said, in future advertisements, VLCC should disclose prominently the specific body areas targeted for fat reduction.

The ads and disclaimers should mention that the procedure works only for individuals with BMI of 30 or less.

"Clearly mention -- 'The CoolSculpting Procedure is used for treatment of the focal fat deposits and not weight loss' in both advertisements and consent forms, in a clear and easily readable manner," the authority directed. VLCC has been told to restrict claims strictly to what has been approved by the US-FDA.

"Inform consumers about the absence of testing on the Indian demographic and the lack of US-FDA endorsement for India before they avail of the service," CCPA told VLCC.

The authority also asked the company to discontinue unfair and prejudicial contract clauses that attempt to escape legal liability and accountability for the claims made. CCPA further cautioned all beauty clinics, wellness centers, and service providers using CoolSculpting machines in India that these directions must be followed with strict adherence.

Any violation will invite stringent action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, including penalties, discontinuation of misleading advertisements, and legal proceedings.

Earlier, CCPA had imposed ₹ 3 lakh fine on Kaya Limited for publishing misleading advertisements on CoolSculpting treatments. Kaya Ltd complied with the order and paid the penalty amount. (PTI)

Pen maker Linc aims to grow at 15-20 pc CAGR for 5 years

KOLKATA, Aug 23: Despite increasing digitalisation, writing instruments maker Linc Ltd is aiming to achieve a 15-20 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) for five years, a top company official said on Saturday.

The Kolkata-based company has around ₹550 crore of revenue at present, with core operating profitability EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) at 11 per cent, he said. "We plan to grow at 15 per cent to 20 per cent CAGR for four to five years. The operating profitability is 11 per cent with revenue at ₹ 550 crore. There is room to increase the EBITDA," Linc Ltd Managing Director Deepak Jalan said. The pen maker has three JVs with companies in Japan, Turkey and Korea, and has a majority stake in an entity in Kenya, he said.

The growth of the writing instruments industry in India is between five and six per cent, and increasing digitalisation has stunted the progress to some extent, Jalan said.

Globally, the size of the industry is USD 20 billion, while the same is ₹ 10,000 crore in India, with the presence of organised and unorganised players. "The industry in India is fragmented", he said. Stating that the industry is not too capital-intensive, Jalan said the company has been making capital expenditure of around ₹ 20 crore per year.

The money is spent towards capacity expansion and modernisation, he said. Linc has two manufacturing units in West Bengal and Gujarat.

Jalan said the company is in the process of setting up another unit in a joint venture in Gujarat, and the operations will commence from October this year. He also said another unit is being set up in West Bengal near its existing facility in South 24 Parganas district.

Linc exports its products to 50 countries in the world, while the African market being served by its acquired company in Kenya.

The export revenue is ₹ 100 crore, Jalan said. The company manufactures ball and gel pens, markers, sketch pens and crayons. Fountain pen volumes have become insignificant in India, he added. (PTI)

Himanta spikes Jamiat's

Contd. from Page 1...

'sardars' (chief) of unknown people. They want to live with these unknown people, and they are not the representatives of the indigenous people,' the CM said. Sarma did not clarify who the "unknown people" are. He had used the expression several times during his Independence Day speech too, in an apparent reference to Bengali-speaking Muslims. The CM alleged that it was Madani who did not allow the appointment of teachers who cleared the Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) when he was the education minister in the Congress government.

"In association with the late chief minister Tarun Gogoi, he (Madani) would call our officers to a room and make them cry," said Sarma who joined the BJP in 2015. "Their frustration has become clear after the recent eviction drive and our decision to discontinue Aadhaar cards to those above the age of 18. They wanted to occupy Assam and Congress had allowed it to happen," he said.

Sarma on Thursday announced that people above 18 years of age will not get first-time Aadhaar cards in the state as a precautionary measure to check illegal immigrants from getting Indian citizenship. "Assam has taken steps, though they may be small, to build embankments, and local youth are getting government jobs. Indigenous people have the right to their lands and those who need to be evicted are being removed," he said.

In its resolution, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind claimed it has always opposed encroachments on government land but the current actions in Assam are being carried out in an inhuman and discriminatory manner, motivated by religious prejudice and hate-filled rhetoric. He said that all unauthorised occupation of forest land, VGR (Village Grazing Reserve), PGR (Professional Grazing Reserve), 'Satras' (Vaishnavite monastery), 'Namghars' (prayer houses), and other public areas would be cleared in a phased manner. Most of the people displaced due to the eviction drive are from the Bengali-speaking Muslims community, referred to as 'Miyas' in the state, who claim that their ancestors had moved and settled in the areas where drives were carried out after their land in the 'Char' or riverine areas were washed away due to erosion by the River Brahmaputra. (PTI)

We have certain red lines

committed to defend the interests of our farmers and small producers. We are very determined on that. That's not something we can compromise on," he said. The negotiations for a bilateral trade deal between the two countries hit a roadblock after India refused to open up its agricultural and dairy sectors.

The external affairs minister also responded to repeated allegations by Trump administration officials that India is 'profiteering' by buying discounted Russian crude oil and then selling refined petroleum products at premium prices in Europe and other places. "It's funny to have people who work for a pro-business American administration accusing other people of doing business," Jaishankar said.

"That's really curious. If you have a problem buying oil or refined products from India, don't buy it. Nobody forces you to buy it. But Europe buys, America buys, so you don't like it, don't buy it," he said.

Jaishankar listed India's procurement of Russian crude oil as the second key issue in its ties with the US.

"The second issue, in a way, is being presented as an oil issue. But why I say it's being presented is because the same arguments which have been used to target India have not been applied to the largest oil importer, which is China, has not been applied to the largest LNG importer, which is the European Union," he said. "I think it would be a mistaken analysis to try and crunch everything and make it into an integrated response to a very specific situation," he said. (PTI)

Govt working to make

promoting economic self-reliance through MMUA," he said. Earlier in the day, Sarma performed the bhoomi puja and laid the foundation stones for two major projects in Jagiroad — a Working Women's Hostel near the Tata Semiconductor plant site and the Co-District Commissioner's Office of Jagiroad Co-district at Bhakatgaon in Mayong.

Referring to the hostel project, the chief minister said, "We are not just building the future of Assam's tech landscape in Jagiroad, but also creating an entire enabling ecosystem surrounding it. Laid the foundation stone of the Working Women's Hostel in Jagiroad, which will be ready on time to help women employees of the OSAT facility." According to the Chief Minister's Office, the hostel will be constructed at a cost of ₹142 crore and will have a capacity of 830 beds spread across 10 storeys.

It will feature modern infrastructure, a green and zero-waste campus, and a cycle-friendly, barrier-free design. The CMO described it as "a landmark step towards safe, modern and sustainable housing for the women workforce, empowering inclusive growth in Assam." The new Co-District Commissioner's Office, meanwhile, is aimed at bringing administration closer to the people of Jagiroad and enhancing efficiency in the delivery of services.

The programme was attended by Water Resources Minister and Jagiroad MLA Pijush Hazarika, Food and Civil Supplies Minister and Guardian Minister of Morigaon district Kaushik Rai, MLA Ramakanta Deuri, Tiwa Autonomous Council CEM Jibon Chandra Konwar, Additional Chief Secretary of Panchayat and Rural Development Dr B Kalyan Chakravarty, State Mission Director of the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission Kuntal Moni Sarmah Bordoloi, Morigaon DC Anamika Tewari, Morigaon Zilla Parishad Chairperson Pronoti Kalita Deka, and other dignitaries. During his visit to the district, the chief minister also paid homage to late social worker Nathuram Hazarika at his residence in Ahatguri by offering floral tributes. (With inputs from PTI)

FIR against journalists

in a case filed by the Morigaon Police. The case was registered under Sections 152 (sedition), 196, 197(1)(D)(3)(6), 353, 45 and 61 of the BNS, 2023. Guwahati Police on Thursday registered an FIR against another journalist, Abhisar Sharma, who has said that he will respond legally. The complainant alleged that the featuring of Najam Sethi of Pakistan adds an "international dimension that risks projecting India's constitutional democracy as oppressive, while potentially lending intellectual validation to narratives peddled by hostile regimes".

"When such interviews are timed immediately after a terror attack and are broadcast widely to a domestic and global audience, they cannot be seen as mere dissent; they risk becoming instruments of misinformation, sedition, and national destabilisation under the cloak of journalism," he said.

The complainant alleged that Karan Thapar had hosted a series of interviews on 'The Wire' with individuals such as Najam Sethi, Ashutosh Bhardwaj, and former Jammu and Kashmir governor Satya Pal Malik (who died on August 5) wherein "grave and offensive remarks have been made against the Government of India, particularly in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack".

"These interviews go beyond journalistic scrutiny and appear to provide a platform for unverified, inflammatory, and politically charged statements that directly or indirectly assign blame to the Indian state for acts of terrorism perpetrated by cross-border elements," he alleged. Particularly alarming is the repeated use of these interviews to suggest complicity, negligence, or even orchestration by Indian authorities, an insinuation that plays directly into the hands of enemy propaganda and sows distrust among the citizenry, the complainant claimed.

The complainant mentioned a list of articles that have portrayed the Indian state as "entirely ineffective and by glorifying Pakistani terrorists as smarter than us", stating that the content "recklessly erodes public confidence in national security institutions and undermines the morale of our armed forces".

An article belittled the constitutional office of the Prime Minister and also maligns the response mechanisms of the Indian state in the face of terrorism, thereby weakening public trust in the government's ability to protect its citizens, he said. By framing the Pahalgam terror attack as a failure of India's sovereign policies and echoing enemy narratives, the article dangerously shifts blame from Pakistan-sponsored terrorism to domestic governance, the complainant said. (PTI)

Desi community pledges

further encroachment and illegal acquisition of land. The meeting at Madhusaulmari was seen as an important expression of the Desi community's determination to safeguard its land, culture, and existence amid perceived threats from demographic changes and external pressures.

Three senior UPPL leaders

Similarly, in Tamulpur, Rafael Daimary, president of the Darrangajuli block committee and a retired school head-teacher, stepped down from both his post and the party's primary membership, citing domestic and technical inconveniences. The resignations are seen as a setback to the ruling party in the run-up to the BTC elections scheduled for September. The UPPL has so far announced 18 candidates for the 40-member council, while its main rival BPF has declared 22 and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP) three. The BJP, AGP and Congress are expected to announce their candidates shortly. (With inputs from PTI)

Plantation along border

512.1-km border with Nagaland, with a dispute over the boundary since the creation of the neighbouring state in 1963. The matter is now pending before the Supreme Court for a resolution.

It was said in the Assam assembly in March that 59,490.21 hectares of land have been captured by Nagaland. The Assam government had carried out a two-phase massive eviction drive at Rengma recently.

It had cleared encroachments on around 9,000 bighas (over 1,200 hectares) of land, affecting around 1,500 families, mostly from the Muslim community, in the five-day-long first phase exercise that ended on August 2.

The second phase inside Rangma Reserve Forest was conducted on August 18 to clear encroachment on around 26 hectares of land, displacing 41 families, according to official information. Soon after the eviction drives, local reports had claimed that Naga people were attempting to encroach the cleared land, which was dismissed by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma. "There is no encroachment by Naga people. In fact, Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio will join hands with us for the plantation drive. We aim to plant saplings in 12,000 bighas of land at Rengma. This is going to be a significant step from an ecological point of view," the Assam CM had said. (PTI)

Gauhati univ research

Naba Kumar Hazarika - said receiving the patent for their work is a major boost for natural health solutions. Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu congratulated the research team on this milestone. "This achievement highlights the power of academic research, and I urge all higher education institutions to encourage such innovation that transforms knowledge into solutions for society," the minister posted on X.

Gauhati University's Vice Chancellor Prof Nani Gopal Mahanta said, the patent reflects the institution's focus on turning traditional knowledge into practical health aids. It is a proud moment for the university as it highlights our commitment to scientific innovation rooted in cultural wisdom. This accomplishment also sets an inspiring example for our students and researchers, reaffirming that Gauhati University remains a pioneer in impactful and socially relevant research," he said. (PTI)

Deep space exploration

India," he said, and cited satellite-based assessment in crop insurance schemes, satellite-enabled information and safety for fishermen, disaster management applications, and the use of geospatial data in the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan. Modi said three days ago he met Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who unfurled the national flag at the International Space Station and filled every Indian with pride. He said that when Shukla showed him the tricolour, he was touched beyond words. Modi said that in his interaction with the astronaut, he witnessed the boundless courage and infinite dreams of the youth of New India. (PTI)

ADR CM rich list spotlights 33-yr-old non-political, entrepreneurial journey of Chandrababu Naidu

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has once again topped the Association of Democratic Reforms' (ADR) annual list of India's richest CMs, with most of his declared ₹931 crore wealth coming from his family's stake in a pure-play dairy retail firm he founded 33 years ago without any state support.

The ADR report, based on affidavits filed by chief ministers before the last assembly elections they contested, lists West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at the bottom on the list.

While Naidu does not own any shares in Heritage Foods Ltd - the milk and dairy product retailer set up in 1992 with a seed capital of just ₹ 7,000 and listed on bourses in 1994 - his wife Bhuvaneshwari Nara owns a 24.37 per cent stake, which is counted as the Andhra chief minister's wealth.

Nara family (promoters) own a total of 41.3 per cent of Heritage Foods which has seen market capitalisation rise from just ₹ 25 crore in 1995 to ₹ 4,381 crore (based on Friday's closing price of shares on the BSE).

The market capitalisation reached its highest ever ₹ 6,755 crore during June 2024, with lifetime high shareholders of 1,81,907.

Explaining the context, Heritage Foods officials said the company is a pure-play dairy products retailer and not in any crony capitalist sector like infrastructure.



A retail firm, which does not get any government subsidy or other support, can only grow if its products are accepted by masses. And this company was set up when Naidu was just an MLA. He became chief minister of the state much after the firm got listed on stock exchanges.

They said in the early 1990s Naidu's home district of Chittoor in united Andhra Pradesh was the state's largest milk producing district.

In 1992, there was a milk surplus and there was a marketing crisis for the milk farmers.

Spurred by this opportunity, Naidu set up Heritage Foods in 1992 with an authorised capital of ₹ 1 crore and paid-up capital of ₹ 7,000.

Heritage commenced its operations during 1993 and brought an initial public offering (IPO) in the

following year. It was oversubscribed 54 times, and shares were listed on the BSE and NSE. An amount of ₹ 6.50 crore was raised from the IPO.

During the first year of its operations, Heritage Foods set up its first milk chilling unit at Chittoor with an investment of ₹ 1.60 crore, they said adding it handled 19,000 litres of milk per day and clocked revenue of ₹ 4.36 crore in its maiden year of operation with a profit (PAT) of ₹ 19 lakh.

The turnover of the company crossed ₹ 100 crore by FY 2000 (April 1999 to March 2000 financial year), ₹ 500 crore by FY 2008, ₹ 1,000 crore by FY 2011, ₹ 2,000 crore by FY 2016, ₹ 3,000 crore by FY 2023, and ₹ 4,000 crore by FY 2025.

The net worth of the company grew from ₹ 9.99 crore (1994) to ₹ 972 crore (2025).

The growth of the company was funded by raising debt from a consortium of banks - Bank of Baroda, Andhra Bank (now Union Bank of India), ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Officials said Heritage Foods was born out of a crisis facing dairy farmers in Chittoor district. It capitalised on the opportunity that was created by the economic reforms of the early 1990s, which opened up the milk sector for private investments.

"This social enterprise was built on ethical principles driven by the noble purpose of empowering the farmers, which is reflected in the mission statement of the company," one of the officials explained.

Bhuvaneshwari took over the responsibility of running Heritage Foods in 1994 after Naidu resigned from the company to join the government of Andhra Pradesh as minister and later as Chief Minister.

She is the managing director of the company while Nara Brahmani (daughter-in-law of Naidu) is executive director for more than a decade now. Brahmani, the wife of Nara Lokesh, is a graduate of Stanford business school who has worked in leading global dairy companies.

Loans taken from Bank of Baroda and other nationalized banks towards expansion activities were repaid and post COVID, Heritage Foods was declared a debt-free company, they said. (PTI)

Suspend toll collection until Assam highways are repaired: Gogoi to Gadkari

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi wrote to Union Highway Minister Nitin Gadkari, urging him to suspend toll collection on highways in the state until they are repaired.

Gogoi, the deputy leader of the opposition in Lok Sabha, claimed that resentment among the people was growing over toll collection on highways that are in a "deplorable" condition.

"The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) continues to collect tolls on key stretches of NH-27 and NH-37, despite the roads being plagued with deep potholes, uneven surfaces, and frequent water-logging," he said in the letter made available to the press on Saturday.

"These conditions endanger lives, damage vehicles, and cause severe delays. Of particular concern are the toll plazas between Sonapur-Raha (NH-27/NH-37) and Baihata Chariali (Madanpur)-Nalbari (Galita toll plaza), with several accidents and prolonged travel time," he said.

Gogoi, the MP of Jorhat, said demonstra-



tions have also taken place against both existing and upcoming toll plazas, with people protesting rising toll charges amid flood, unemployment, and inflation.

"Truckers and transporters, vital to

Assam's agrarian economy, report unsustainable costs that raise essential commodity prices, further burdening households," he said.

"The matter has assumed urgency in

light of a recent judgment of the Supreme Court on the condition of NH-544 in Kerala by observing that citizens cannot be compelled to pay tolls for navigating gutters and potholes, symbols of inefficiency," he added.

Gogoi said the order emphasised that the very basis of toll collection lies in providing safe and regulated access, and failure to ensure this undermines the legitimacy of the toll regime itself.

"As per the judgment, tolls cannot continue until unhindered and safe travel is restored," he said.

Gogoi said he had earlier raised similar concerns regarding NH-37, but "unfortunately, the situation on NH-27 and NH-37 has only worsened and now demands urgent intervention".

He urged Gadkari to direct the NHAI to suspend toll collection at the toll plazas he mentioned until the highways are repaired and certified motorable, and conduct an audit of all toll plazas in the state to ensure compliance with maintenance standards. (PTI)

Governor holds district review meeting with Cachar administration



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who is in Silchar, chaired a district review meeting with the District Commissioner and heads of various departments of Cachar district at the Conference Hall of the DC's office today.

DC Mridul Yadav presented a detailed report on the implementation of flagship programmes of the Central and State Governments.

The Governor reviewed the progress of Amrit Sarovar projects and sought details on infrastructure development, including flagpoles, shades, and seating arrangements.

Highlighting Cachar's potential in fisheries, he enquired about hatchery facilities, seed demand, and stressed strengthening infrastructure to boost productivity. On

the TB Mukta Abhiyan, he urged officials to intensify the Nikshay Mitra initiative and called for collective commitment to eradicate tuberculosis.

Expressing satisfaction over the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP), Shri Acharya emphasized popularizing affordable Jan Aushadhi medicines. He also reviewed measures to reduce school drop-outs, improve single-teacher schools, and promote NCC and NSS among students.

Additionally, he reviewed the performance of key departments including PWD, Agriculture, PHE, Social Forestry, and Irrigation.

Later, the Governor held a security review meeting with SP Numal Mahato and took stock of the law and order situation in the district.

Assam DGP reviews law and order situation in BTR

KOKRAJHAR, Aug 23: Assam Director General of Police Harmeet Singh on Saturday reviewed the law and order situation in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) ahead of the announcement of council polls expected to be held in September. Security situation, crime scenario and other policing issues were discussed with officers at a meeting here, the DGP told mediapersons here.

"As you are aware, Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls will be held soon and as such a review of the law and order situation is required to ensure free, fair and zero-incident elections are held," he said. The DGP said the police are committed to ensure that the people do not face any problem during the election process. "This is our job and we will do it in the best possible manner," he added. If any incident takes place, police will take action as per law and "there has been no major incident so far, and our police force will not allow it to happen", the DGP said. Election to the 40-member BTC is expected to be held in September this year, and the final electoral rolls have already been published. (PTI)

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma visits Nagaon, inaugurates projects



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Aug 23: Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma visited Nagaon district today, where he was welcomed by local MLA Rupak Sarma.

He inaugurated a welcome arch at Dimou near Bebejia, marking the entrance to Nagaon town, and later unveiled a statue of freedom fighter Manbor Nath at Jamuguri in the presence of a large gathering.

The CM also visited Garakhya Than and offered prayers for the well-being of the people of Assam.

The event was attended by Minister Piyush Hazarika, Guardian Minister Koushik Roy, Nagaon MLA Rupak Sarma, and Raha MLA Shashi Kanta Das.

Two houses gutted in Jorhat fire; LPG cylinders explode

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Aug 23: Two houses on the Bhogdai river bank beside Formud Ali Path (formerly Royal Road) were completely destroyed in a devastating fire on Friday night.

According to sources, all belongings of the families were gutted. The fire intensified after LPG cylinders exploded, despite locals rushing to help the residents.

Several fire tenders managed to control the blaze and prevented it from spreading further. The cause of the fire is yet to be determined.

This is the second fire in Jorhat within a week. On August 16, two huts at Malowali Kamalabaria locality, where rickshaw pullers resided, were destroyed.

So far in 2025, four major fire incidents have occurred in Jorhat, including Friday's blaze. Earlier, two incidents took place at a godown in Borpool (February) and at an LG showroom in a multi-storied building at Marwari Patty—Old Balibat (April).

Guwahati student Kuhi Deka wins gold in CBSE Regional Yoga Championship



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Kuhi Deka, a class 9 student of St. Mary's Senior Secondary School, Maligaon, Guwahati, won a gold medal at the CBSE Regional Yoga Sports Championship (North East) held at Delhi Public School, Tezpur.

The event saw participation from 55 schools across the region. Kuhi, daughter of Balobhadra and Pallabi Deka, excelled in the under-17 girls' category and has qualified to represent the Northeast in the National Yoga Sports Competition, scheduled in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, from September 8 to 12.

The school principal, teachers, and students congratulated her. Yoga trainer Subhashish Kor, Dhananjay Talukdar, and several organizations also extended best wishes.

Two-Day Conference on GST appellate tribunal litigation procedures 'Sameeksha' concludes at ICAI Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Aug 23: The Guwahati Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), under the aegis of the Goods & Service Tax & Indirect Taxes Committee of ICAI, successfully hosted "Sameeksha", a two-day conference on Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) Litigation Procedures, on 22nd and 23rd August 2025 at ICAI Bhawan, Guwahati. CA. Ravi Kumar Patwa, ICAI Central Council Member from Silchar, was the Programme Director, and the programme was curated and coordinated by Branch Chairperson CA. Raginee Goyal.



The sessions on the first day, conducted by Adv. (CA) Shreya Mundhra from Kolkata and Adv.

Neerav Mainkar from Mumbai, offered participants deep insights into the processes of drafting, filing, and representing appeals before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is expected to start functioning very soon in the near future. The discussions covered the legal framework, preparation and verification of appeal forms, handling of defects and condonation of delay, as well as practical aspects of drafting statements of facts, grounds of appeal, and pleadings.

After gaining a detailed understanding of the procedures, a Moot Tribunal was conducted by CA. Sushil Kumar Goyal and

Adv. Boudhayan Bhattacharya from Kolkata. The session simulated a full-day, real-life tribunal to train Chartered Accountants in representing cases before the GSTAT. This hands-on format not only enhanced conceptual clarity but also provided members with a unique opportunity to sharpen their advocacy and representation skills in a court setting. The sessions were highly engaging, combining legal acumen with practical application, and provided participants with valuable learning to enable them to develop appeal litigation in GSTAT as a potential future area of practice.

CRPF officials laud Karbi Anglong's multi-utility sports complex as national model



HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Aug 23: The newly constructed Multi-Utility Sports Complex at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium in Diphu has garnered significant appreciation from senior officials of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

The delegation, including Dr Prem Chand, DIG (CSO) Training Directorate, CRPF; Dr Kenjom Ngomdir, CMO (SG)/Commandant (Med), Training Directorate CRPF; and Inspector Sachin, Chief Coach (Athletics), visited the state-of-the-art facility on Friday following a meeting with Tuliram

Ronghang, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), at his official bungalow.

The visit was facilitated on the advice of Gyanendra Pratap Singh, IPS, former DGP, Assam and present Director General of CRPF.

The CRPF officials were highly impressed by the world class infrastructure, which includes six specialised halls for sports such as badminton, basketball, futsal, karate, chess, and yoga, along with a gymnasium.

The complex also features a 100 seat conference hall, a 1,200 seat multipurpose hall, office and din-

ing facilities, a grand open stage with a 4,000 seat capacity including a VVIP gallery, and a 200 bedded accommodation facility supported by hotels and restaurants.

Describing the KASA Stadium as a unique facility in India, the CRPF officials proposed adopting its design as a model for a similar project in New Delhi.

CEM Ronghang, accompanied by Executive Member Madhuram Lekhte, MAC Heasding Rongphar, and others, expressed pride in this recognition, calling it a significant achievement for the people of Karbi Anglong.

Heroine seized at Khakrajan police gate

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Aug 23: The Karbi Anglong police in a routine check at Khakrajan police check gate intercepted a car, AS 06 L 5352, at around 8 in the morning. On thoroughly checking the car which was coming from Dimapur, Nagaland, heroine packed in 45 plastic cases were found inside the car which weighed 534.76 gms with a market value of ₹ 1.1 crore. In this connection one Vetshekro Tsuzuh, a resident of Phek, Dimapur district, Nagaland, PO Chinzimi Thetsumi has been arrested.

It may be mentioned that Dimapur has become the thre-

oughfare for drug smuggling of the Golden Triangle and the route went through Karbi Anglong. Heroin, methamphetamine, morphine, SP capsule and poppy husks are smuggled and often caught by the police on the route. Nobody is sure about the amount of drugs smuggled through Karbi Anglong that aspires to reach the NE premier city of Guwahati and from there to Bharat's metros like Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore. The police catching the smugglers and seizing the contraband is no deterrent for the operators of the Golden Triangle to keep on the trade of smuggling drugs through NE India.

Wild elephant found dead in Biswanath Chariali

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Aug 23: A wild elephant that had strayed out of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve (KNP&TR) in search of food was found dead this morning in a paddy field at Uppar Gorpai, southern Sootea.

Residents discovered the carcass and informed Biswanath Wildlife Division, Forest Department, and Sootea Police. A veterinary team conducted an autopsy, though the cause of death is yet to be confirmed. The elephant's body was cremated as per protocol.

It is noteworthy that just days ago, an elephant calf from KNP&TR was also found dead in the adjoining area.

Assam shines at 33rd National Karate-do C'ship

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Aug 23: Assam karate team bagged 12 medals in the recently concluded 33rd National Karate-do Championship held from 17 to 20 August at Raipur, Chhattisgarh.

The tournament was organised by All India Karate Federation (AIKF).

In the Assam team, out of 14 participants, 8 were from Diphu Dojo (karate school), Karbi Anglong and 2 from West Karbi Anglong.

The team was led by manager Stephan Hansel.

Jacinta Hansepi, instructor of

Diphu Dojo and Borsing Rongphar were judges in the competition.

Out of 12 medals received by the Assam team, include 2 gold, 5 silver and 5 bronze.

From Karbi Anglong Klarjir Teronpi bagged one gold medal in Kumete, Serjelin Teronpi silver medal in Kata, Nathaniel Timung silver medal in Kumete and bronze medal in Kata, Sengklar Ronghang silver medal in Kumete, Nong'eh Timung silver medal in Kumete, Denghai Kramsa bronze, Lorna Teronpi bronze medal in Kumete, Sangmet Singnarpi bronze in Kumete.

ELECTRICAL PORTION OF WORKS

Tender Notice No.: EL/1/DB/W/1/DBWS/Up-gradation/2025-26/83 (3), **Dated:** 20-08-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Name of Work:** At Dibrugarh Workshop - "Electrical portion of work in connection with up-gradation of maintenance facilities for other rolling stocks (LHB/ICF)". **Tender Value:** ₹93,84,052.39/-, **Bid Security:** ₹1,87,700/-. **Date & time of closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 10-09-2025.** For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 10-09-2025 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

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KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M) DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT DIPHU:: 782460

Email ID transportdeptkaac@gmail.com

CORRIGENDUM

The earlier advertisement vide letter No.KAAC/TRN/Advertisement/2009-10/26/1462 Dated.16/08/2025 for an interview (oral/viva voice) and driving test for engagement of contractual driver (LMV-HMV) under Transport Department, KAAC, Diphu have been modified due to technical error, it may read as under.

Sl No.	Roll No	Date of Interview	Time	Venue
1.	1-100 (LMV)	26/08/2025	11.00 AM	Office of the Executive Engineer (M), KAAC, Diphu
2.	101-181 (LMV)	27/08/2025	11.00 AM	Office of the Executive Engineer (M), KAAC, Diphu
3.	1-29 (HMV)	27/08/2025	11.00 AM	Office of the Executive Engineer (M), KAAC, Diphu

Other content of the aforesaid order date 17/08/2025 shall remain unchanged.

Sd/
Executive Engineer (M),
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
Diphu

Memo No.KAAC/TRN/Advertisement/2009-2010/26 1482(1) Dated.22/08/2025

Shankardeva's Unparalleled Creation : Gayan-Bayan

The Gayan and the Bayan. The Gayan sings and dances while holding a small cymbal or "patital," while the Bayan plays the khol (drum) and synchronizes the dance with the rhythm of the song. The synergy between the two creates a captivating harmony, making the performance vibrant and engaging. The Gayan's songs express devotional sentiments, while the Bayan's rhythmic drumming deepens this emotion. The songs used in these performances are typically based on the Bargits composed by Shankardeva and Madhavdeva. These songs, though simple in language, carry profound meanings, expressing Krishna's divine pastimes, the glory of devotion, and surrender to the divine. The fusion of the Gayan's melodic singing and the Bayan's khol rhythms creates a mystical experience for the audience. The deep resonance of the khol and the precision of the cymbals enhance the devotional essence of the songs.



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Gayan-Bayan' is an invaluable treasure of Assamese culture, deeply intertwined with the religious, cultural, and social life of Assam for centuries. This tradition, introduced by the great saint Shri Shankardeva, forms an inseparable part of Vaishnava religion and Shankari culture. Gayan-Bayan is not merely a fusion of music and instrumental performance; rather, it is a spiritual practice that embodies a remarkable synthesis of devotion, discipline, and artistry. The combination of the singer's melodies and the instrumentalist's rhythms in a Gayan-Bayan performance creates a spiritual ambience, evoking an aesthetic and sacred experience in the hearts of the audience. Every aspect of this art form—such as melody, rhythm, dance movements, and attire—is meticulously planned and disciplined. The profound depth of Gayan-Bayan has established it as a unique identity of Assamese culture. It is not just a performance but a vibrant reflection of the cultural and religious heritage of the Assamese people. Through this tradition, individuals from various strata of Assamese society come together, promoting messages of unity, devotion, and harmony. The atmosphere created during a Gayan-Bayan performance calms the minds of the audience, making them participants in a spiritual journey. The influence of Shankardeva's philosophy is evident in every facet of this tradition, which illuminates the path to attaining oneness with the divine through devotion. The spiritual and artistic dimensions of Gayan-Bayan have rightfully earned it the title of the heartbeat of Assamese culture.

As the greatest architect of Assamese culture and nation-building, Shankardeva, with his un-

paralleled intellect and creative genius, devised various initiatives to guide contemporary society toward an enlightened path and to lead the unlettered masses toward progress through the establishment of namghars and satras across villages. Among these initiatives, he conceptualized the performance of Bhaona and composed several Ankiya Nats to this end. His trusted disciple, the erudite scholar Mahapurush Madhavdeva, along with later Vaishnava dramatists such as Bhawanipuria Gopal Ata (Gopaldeva), Ramcharan Thakur, and Daityari Thakur, played significant roles in making this initiative successful and popular. As a profound outcome of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement, Shankardeva's magnificent artistic creation, "Bhaona," was crafted not only as a medium for propagating the ideals of devotion but also as a vibrant social art form, enriched with a harmonious blend of music, drama, and dance. The origin of Gayan-Bayan is deeply connected to this Bhaona culture. This historical context provides a clear understanding of the depth and significance of Gayan-Bayan. In essence, it is not merely an art form but a living reflection of the religious and social life of Assamese society. The core essence of Shankardeva's philosophy was to achieve oneness with the divine through devotion, and Gayan-Bayan can be seen as an artistic expression of this vision. Every element of this tradition, such as the melody of the songs, the rhythm of the instruments, and the dance movements, is intricately linked to Shankardeva's philosophy. The impact of this philosophy becomes evident during Gayan-Bayan performances, awakening a spiritual consciousness in both performers and spectators. The historical significance of this tradition has established it as an integral part of Assamese culture, carrying the heritage of the Assamese people from one generation to the next.

In Bhaona, Gayan-Bayan performances hold special significance. Gayan-Bayan is an essential component of Bhaona, playing a crucial role in the initiation and various segments of the drama. A Bhaona begins with the performance of the Gayan-Bayan pair, creating a sacred atmosphere in the minds of the audience. Just before the pair's entry, a wooden structure called the "Agnigarh" is adorned with a lit lamp, symbolizing the nine principal forms of devotion and referred to as the "Bhakti-Pradip" (Lamp of Devotion). A plain white cloth is held by two devotees alongside the Agnigarh, symbolizing "maya" (illusion). The white cloth represents the transcendence of illusion to attain the path of pure devotion. As the pair enters, the lead singer chants the introductory verse: "(Yesham) Shrimad Yashodasuta Pada Kamale Nastibhaktirtarnanaam / Yeshamaabheera-Kanya-Priya Guna Kathane Nanurakta Rasajna / Yesham Shrikrishna Leela Lalita Guna Katha Sadaro Naiva Kanor / Dhiktan Dhiktan Dhigetaan Kathayati Nitaram Kirtanastho Mridangah" (sourced from Dr. Keshavananda Devagoswami's book *Ankiya Bhaona*). The Gayan-Bayan pair enters the stage gracefully, passing under the Agnigarh. Two individuals follow, carrying two lit "Ariyas" (lamps), symbolizing two primary forms of devotion. Upon entering the namghar, the pair circles seven times, invoking the seven Vaikunthas (divine realms), with the audience acting as the assembly of Vaikuntha. The Bayan raises their hand and utters the sound "Dhei," marking the commencement of the Gayan-Bayan performance. During this performance, various forms of "dhemali," such as small dhemali, large dhemali, and



ghosa dhemali, are presented, associated with gurughat and specific ragas and raginis, making the performance more engaging. In various segments of Bhaona, such as the entry of the Sutradhar, the dance of the Bhaoriya, and the acting sequences, Gayan-Bayan performances are indispensable. Through the songs and dances used in Gayan-Bayan, the devotional essence of Bhaona is expressed, deeply connecting the audience with the narrative. At the conclusion of a Bhaona, the Gayan-Bayan pair performs the Mukti Mangal Bhatima or Kalyan Kharman, invoking blessings for the well-being of all.

The Gayan-Bayan performance features two central figures: the Gayan and the Bayan. The Gayan sings and dances while holding a small cymbal or "patital," while the Bayan plays the khol (drum) and synchronizes the dance with the



rhythm of the song. The synergy between the two creates a captivating harmony, making the performance vibrant and engaging. The Gayan's songs express devotional sentiments, while the Bayan's rhythmic drumming deepens this emotion. The songs used in these performances are typically based on the Bargits composed by Shankardeva and Madhavdeva. These songs, though simple in language, carry profound meanings, expressing Krishna's divine pastimes, the glory of devotion, and surrender to the divine. The fusion of the Gayan's melodic singing and the Bayan's khol rhythms creates a mystical experience for the audience. The deep resonance of the khol and the precision of the cymbals enhance the devotional essence of the songs. The performance is meticulously planned, requiring perfect coordination between the Gayan and the Bayan.

This harmony transforms the Gayan-Bayan pair into a form of spiritual practice, purifying not only the performers' minds but also those of the audience. The blend of the Gayan's melodies and the Bayan's rhythms establishes the performance as a dynamic art form, leaving a profound impact on the audience. Every aspect of the performance demands discipline and dedication, achievable only through years of practice and commitment. This harmony and discipline have made Gayan-Bayan an indispensable part of Assamese culture.

A significant aspect of Gayan-Bayan performances is the associated attire. The costumes of the Gayan and Bayan are distinctive and steeped in tradition. The Bayan typically wears a white chapkan, a pag (turban), and, depending on the region, a decorated dhoti. The Gayan wears a white chola called a chowkon, a pag, and a decorated dhoti. The white color of the attire symbolizes spiritual purity, reflecting the devotee's mental clarity and complete surrender to the divine. Accessories such as garlands of bakul flowers or tuls beads further deepen the spiritual dimension of the performance. These garlands are typically bestowed upon performers as blessings by the satradhikar. Each element of the attire carries its own significance and is worn with great reverence. Traditionally, these costumes were made of muga silk, tied to Assam's heritage, though cotton is increasingly used in modern times. The simplicity and purity of the attire

lend a unique dignity to Gayan-Bayan performances. The discipline and rules associated with the attire foster a spiritual consciousness in the performers, enabling them to immerse fully in the devotional mood during the performance. The traditional beauty and significance of the attire add a distinctive dimension to the performance, profoundly impacting the audience. The discipline and reverence associated with the attire instill a sense of responsibility in the performers, inspiring them to perform with greater dedication. This tradition of attire is considered an integral part of Gayan-Bayan, enhancing its spiritual and cultural significance.

Another crucial aspect of Gayan-Bayan performances is the associated dance, a part of the Sattriya dance form introduced by Shankardeva as a traditional Assamese dance. The movements in Sattriya dance are highly disciplined and precise. The role of dance in Gayan-Bayan performances is vital, as it synchronizes with the music and instruments to bring the performance to life. Through dance movements, performers express devotional sentiments, creating a spiritual atmosphere for the audience. Each gesture carries its own significance and is performed with utmost care and discipline. The dance's rhythm and the song's melody require perfect coordination, showcasing the performers' skill and dedication.

The mudras (hand gestures) and steps used in Gayan-Bayan dances express various devotional emotions, adding an aesthetic dimension to the performance. The depth and beauty of the dance make Gayan-Bayan a unique treasure of Assamese culture. The influence of Shankardeva's philosophy is evident in every gesture, guiding performers toward connecting with the divine through devotion. The discipline and dedication of the dance awaken a spiritual consciousness in performers, enabling them to fully immerse in the devotional mood. This depth and discipline lend an ethereal quality to Gayan-Bayan performances, profoundly impacting the audience.

The khol and taal (cymbals) are the primary instruments in Gayan-Bayan performances. The deep resonance of the khol and the precision of the cymbals provide a unique dimension to the performance. The khol is considered the principal instrument in Assam's Vaishnava culture, indispensable to Gayan-Bayan performances. Through the khol's sound, performers synchronize with the song's rhythm, enlivening the performance. The use of cymbals is also a significant aspect, with the small cymbal or patital held by the Gayan to control the dance's rhythm. The combined sound of these instruments creates a mystical atmosphere. The use of instruments demands precision and skill, achiev-

able only through years of practice. The importance of these instruments makes Gayan-Bayan a complex and disciplined art form. The khol's resonance and the cymbals' sharpness add a spiritual dimension to the performance, deeply impacting the audience. The discipline and precision of the instruments lend an ethereal quality to Gayan-Bayan performances, making performers and spectators participants in a spiritual journey.

The Gayan-Bayan tradition remains equally relevant in modern times. Despite the changes brought by modernity to Assamese cultural life, this tradition remains intact. Through satras and namghars, it continues to thrive, retaining its popularity among the younger generation. In modern times, Gayan-Bayan performances are also seen in various cultural events, representing Assamese culture. Various satras and cultural organizations play a vital role in preserving and promoting this tradition. Training programs in various institutions introduce the younger generation to this art form. Through its preservation, efforts continue to keep Assamese cultural heritage intact. The unbroken continuity of Gayan-Bayan strengthens the cultural identity of the Assamese people. Even in modern times, Gayan-Bayan performances showcase the pride of Assamese culture to the world. Through its preservation and promotion, efforts are ongoing to safeguard the Assamese heritage and identity for future generations. This relevance establishes Gayan-Bayan as a living treasure of Assamese culture.

The Gayan-Bayan tradition is a vital part of the cultural and religious life of Assamese society. It unites rural communities, fostering a sense of unity and harmony. Through satras and namghars, this tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. It strengthens the identity of the Assamese people, establishing it as a unique cultural treasure. The discipline, dedication, and devotional essence of Gayan-Bayan performances transform it into a spiritual journey. Every element, such as songs, dance, instruments, and attire, reflects the depth and diversity of Assamese culture. This profundity makes Gayan-Bayan an indispensable part of Assamese life.

In conclusion, the atmosphere created during Gayan-Bayan performances leaves a profound impact on the audience, connecting them with their roots. Through the preservation and promotion of this rich tradition, we must strive to showcase the pride of Assamese culture to the world. Through this glorious tradition, a creation of the great saint, every Assamese individual feels pride in their cultural heritage, and it strengthens our identity before the global community.



Metro of Kolkata: A Saga of Connectivity

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

In the heart of Kolkata, where colonial architecture meets modern ambition, the Metro Railway stands as a testament to the city's evolving spirit. More than just a mode of transport, the Kolkata Metro is a lifeline, a symbol of resilience, and a narrative of connectivity that binds generations, cultures, and aspirations. As India's first metro system, its journey is not merely infrastructural—it is deeply emotional, historical, and symbolic of Kolkata's pulse. To consider the historical genesis, it is a vision ahead of its time. The idea of a metro in Kolkata was conceived for the first time in India as early as the 1960s, when the city grappled with increasing traffic congestion and a growing population. Inspired by global models like the London Underground and Moscow Metro, the Government of India approved the project in 1972. The execution, however, was far from smooth. In 1972 the Metro Railway Company was formed. In 1978, construction began on the North-South Corridor. In 1984 the first stretch from Esplanade to Bhowanipore (now Netaji Bhawan) was inaugurated. This marked a historic moment—not just for Kolkata, but for India. The city became the first in the country to boast an underground railway system, a feat achieved through immense technical challenges and bureaucratic hurdles.

Metro became the North-South lifeline of Kolkata. The original Line 1, stretching from Dum Dum in the north to Tollygunge in the south (later extended

to Kavi Subhash), became the backbone of Kolkata's daily commute. Spanning over 27 kilometers, this corridor cuts through the city's cultural, commercial, and residential zones. Stations like Kalighat, Rabindra Sadan, and Maidan are more than transit points—they are cultural landmarks. Daily ridership surged over the years, with millions relying on the metro to navigate the city's chaos with ease. The North-South line is not just a route—it's a rhythm. Office-goers, students, artists, and vendors all converge in its compartments, creating a microcosm of Kolkata's diverse populace. The expanding horizons are new corridors, new dreams. The success of Line 1 paved the way for ambitious expansions. Today, the Kolkata Metro is no longer a single line—it is a growing network of multiple corridors, each with its own story.

The East-West Corridor is perhaps the most technologically advanced. Line 2 connects Salt Lake Sector V to Howrah Maidan, traversing under the Hooghly River—a first in India. The underwater tunnel is a marvel of engineering, the tunnel beneath the river is a symbol of Kolkata's leap into modernity. Intermodal connectivity with integration to Howrah Railway Station, this line enhances regional and national connectivity. Joka to Esplanade is Line 3. Serving the southern fringes of the city, Line 3 aims to connect educational institutions, residential zones, and commercial hubs. Joka, home to IIM Calcutta, now finds itself better linked to the city's core. The line reflects



Kolkata's commitment to inclusive development, reaching areas previously underserved. Line 4, 5, and 6 are the future pathways. These upcoming lines promise to connect Baranagar to Barrackpore, New Garia to Airport, and other vital stretches. Each line is a thread in the tapestry of Kolkata's future—interwoven with hopes of reduced congestion, economic upliftment, and urban renewal. More than steel and tracks Kolkata's metro is a cultural resonance. It is not just a transport system—it's a cultural phenomenon.

From Rabindra Sarobar to Kavi Nazrul, the nomenclature pays homage to Bengal's literary and artistic giants. Stations like Park Street and Gitanjali feature

murals, poems, and visual tributes to Kolkata's heritage. Announcements in Bengali, Hindi, and English reflect the city's multilingual soul.

The metro becomes a moving gallery, a classroom, and a stage—where the city's ethos is performed daily. For many Kolkatans, the metro evokes nostalgia. It is journey through Time where nostalgia and modernity meet. The rhythmic sound of the train, the rush of air as it enters the station, the familiar faces of co-passengers—it's a daily ritual. Yet, the metro is also a symbol of modernity for the smart cards and app integration, Air conditioned coaches, and security and surveillance. Technology has made commuting seamless. Comfort is

no longer a luxury. Enhanced safety measures reflect global standards. Modernity and nostalgia - this duality—of old-world charm and new-age efficiency—is what makes the Kolkata Metro unique.

Connectivity has resulted in urban transformation. The metro has transformed Kolkata's urban landscape in profound ways. First there is the real estate boom. Areas near metro stations have witnessed a surge in property value and development. Secondly, it reduced traffic. With lakhs opting for metro travel, road congestion has eased. Thirdly, there is the environmental impact. As a green mode of transport, the metro contributes to reduced carbon emissions. More-

over, the metro fosters social connectivity. It bridges class divides, enabling a shared space where all citizens—regardless of background—travel together. The journey of Kolkata Metro has not been without hurdles. There are everyday new and newer challenges. First one is land acquisition issue. Delays in construction due to legal and logistical challenges. This is why the second phase of expansion of the three routes could not connect Garia with the airport. Technical setbacks are many. Tunnel collapses, water seepage, and alignment issues have tested engineers. As to funding and bureaucracy it may be said, navigating government approvals and budget constraints has often slowed progress. Yet, the resilience of planners, workers, and citizens has kept the dream alive. Each completed stretch is a victory of perseverance.

Human stories are the soul of Metro. Beyond infrastructure, the metro is a canvas of human stories: the student who travels from Garia to Salt Lake for classes. Or the elderly couple visiting Kalighat temple, the street performer at Esplanade, whose tunes echo through the corridors. These stories breathe life into the metro. It is not just a system—it is a shared experience, a collective journey. Metro encourages symbolism in literature and art.

The Kolkata Metro has found its way into Bengali literature, films, and poetry. It symbolizes movement, transition, and the passage of time. Poets have likened its tunnels to the subconscious—dark, deep, and full of revelations. Filmmakers use

metro scenes to depict urban loneliness, serendipitous meetings, and the rhythm of city life. In this way, the metro becomes a metaphor—of connectivity not just in space, but in emotion and thought. We look forward to the road ahead and the Vision 2030 and Beyond fills the mind of the people with a joy and thrill. As Kolkata marches toward the future, the metro will play a pivotal role in shaping its destiny. Integrated Transport Systems link metro with buses, trams, and ferries for seamless mobility. AI and automation ensure Smart scheduling, predictive maintenance, and real-time updates. Inclusive design ensures better accessibility for differently-abled passengers, senior citizens, and children. The vision is clear: a metro that is not just efficient, but empathetic—a system that understands and serves its people.

The saga of connectivity from the Kolkata Metro is more than a transport network—it is a saga of resilience, and transformation. From its humble beginnings in 1984 to its ambitious expansions today, it reflects the city's heartbeat. In its tunnels echo the footsteps of millions. In its stations reside memories, dreams, and possibilities. And in its journey lies the story of Kolkata itself—a city that connects past and future, tradition and innovation, soul and steel. As the metro continues to expand, so does Kolkata's horizon. And with every new station, a new chapter is written in this enduring saga of connectivity. Thank you Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving this big bonanza for Kolkata on the eve of Durgapuja.

NEP 2020: Reshaping India's education landscape

By: Satyabrata Borah

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, launched on July 29, 2020, marked a pivotal moment in the country's educational history, introducing an ambitious overhaul of a system long criticized for its rigidity and reliance on rote learning. At the heart of this reform is the 5+3+3+4 academic structure, a bold departure from the traditional 10+2 model, designed to align education with a child's developmental stages and prepare students for a dynamic, skill-driven future. Five years into its implementation, the policy has sparked both optimism and scrutiny, with significant achievements tempered by persistent challenges. The promise of transformation is undeniable, but gaps in infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and systemic coordination highlight the complex road ahead.

The 5+3+3+4 model restructures schooling into four stages: Foundational (ages 3-8, covering three years of preschool and Classes 1-2), Preparatory (ages 8-11, Classes 3-5), Middle (ages 11-14, Classes 6-8), and Secondary (ages 14-18, Classes 9-12). This framework is grounded in the understanding that early childhood is a critical period for cognitive and emotional development. The Foundational stage emphasizes play-based and activity-based learning, leveraging tools like NCERT's Jaadui Pitara kits to foster curiosity and basic literacy. The Preparatory stage builds on these foundations with interactive, discovery-oriented methods. The Middle stage introduces formal subjects through experiential learning, while the Secondary stage encourages critical thinking, multidisciplinary exploration, and career-oriented skills, including vocational training. This structure aims to move away from memorization toward holistic, competency-based education, integrating life skills, creativity, and flexibility in subject choices.

The vision of NEP 2020 is transformative. It prioritizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), recognizing that a child's brain is most active in the early years. By formalizing preschool education, the policy seeks to lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Initiatives like NIPUN Bharat, launched in 2021, target universal foundational literacy and numeracy by Class 3, with surveys showing progress—64% language proficiency and 60% in math by 2024, compared to lower baselines in 2022. The policy also promotes multilingualism, encouraging mother tongue instruction up to at least Class 5 to enhance comprehension and cultural connection. In higher education, the introduction of the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and flexible four-year undergraduate programs allows students to exit with certificates, diplomas, or degrees, fostering mobility and personalization. The Common University Entrance Test (CUET), rolled out in 2022, standardizes admissions, reducing the chaos of multiple entrance exams. Globally, NEP has expanded India's educational footprint, with IITs establishing campuses in Zanzibar and Abu Dhabi and foreign universities like Southampton entering India.

The policy's emphasis on vocational education is another forward-looking move. By integrating skills-based learning from Class 6, NEP aims to prepare 50% of students for vocational tracks by 2025, addressing India's employability gap, where over 50% of graduates lack job-ready skills. States like Maharashtra and Delhi have piloted programs such as the Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum and IDEA Labs, exposing students to practical fields like AI, robotics, and drone technology. The PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0 and national internship portals have linked over 70,000 industries to 2.9 million learners, signaling a shift toward aligning education with industry needs. Additionally, NEP's push for digital integration, through platforms like DIKSHA and NISHTHA, aims to enhance accessibility and teacher training, while the PM SHRI Schools initiative seeks to upgrade 14,500 government schools into model institutions with modern infrastructure and digital classrooms.

Despite these strides, the implementation of NEP 2020 faces significant hurdles, particularly in rural and government schools. Infrastructure gaps remain a critical barrier. Many anganwadis, the backbone of the Foundational stage, operate in single-room setups without basic amenities like toilets or drinking water. An estimated 80% of these centers lack adequate facilities, undermining the ECCE vision. Government schools, especially in remote areas, often lack pre-pri-

mary classes, and teaching-learning materials are scarce. The transition to new curricula has been uneven, with states like Karnataka and Maharashtra updating syllabi, while others face delays in delivering NEP-aligned textbooks. Some grades have relied on outdated materials, leading to inconsistent learning outcomes. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE), released in 2023, provided a roadmap, but textbooks for Classes 9-12 are still pending, creating uncertainty for teachers and students.

Teacher preparedness is another significant challenge. The shift to activity-based and competency-based learning requires a pedagogical overhaul, but many teachers remain untrained in these methods. Traditional B.Ed. programs, aligned with the old 10+2 structure, are outdated, and continuous professional development is limited, particularly in regional government schools. The proposed National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTTE) has not been released, and the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) faces resistance from existing colleges. Teachers need sustained mentoring and classroom support, but current efforts, while bolstered by platforms like DIKSHA, fall short of the scale required. This gap in readiness risks undermining the policy's experiential learning goals.

Parental awareness, especially in semi-urban and rural areas, poses another barrier. Many parents equate education with high marks and rote outcomes, viewing play-based or project-based learning skeptically. Shifting this mindset requires extensive community engagement, which has been slow to materialize. Federal tensions further complicate implementation. States like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal have resisted aspects of NEP, such as the three-language formula, perceiving it as an imposition of Hindi. Tamil Nadu, adhering to a Tamil-English model, has challenged the Centre's withholding of Samagra Shiksha funds over non-compliance with PM SHRI schools. These Centre-state frictions highlight the need for localized, flexible approaches to policy rollout.

Despite these challenges, NEP 2020 has shown promising progress. Enrolment has surged, with higher education reaching 4.46 crore students and marginalized groups seeing 36-75% growth in participation. Female PhD enrolment doubled to 1.12 lakh, reflecting strides in gender inclusion. Over 1.1 crore children are enrolled in Balvatikas, and 4.2 crore have accessed Vidya Pravesh readiness modules. Pilot programs in Delhi, Odisha, and Maharashtra have introduced NEP-aligned curricula, while CBSE's plan to offer board exams twice a year from 2026 aims to reduce academic pressure. The introduction of holistic progress cards, incorporating peer and self-assessments, signals a shift toward comprehensive evaluation, though adoption remains limited.

To realize NEP's transformative potential, several steps are critical. First, infrastructure must be strengthened, particularly in anganwadis and primary schools, to support ECCE. Investments in facilities, teaching materials, and digital tools are essential to bridge urban-rural divides. Second, teacher training needs urgent reform. Updating B.Ed. programs, scaling platforms like NISHTHA, and providing ongoing mentoring can equip educators for the policy's demands. Third, timely curriculum rollout is crucial. States must coordinate to ensure NEP-aligned textbooks and resources reach schools promptly. Fourth, parental and community engagement campaigns are needed to build trust in holistic learning approaches. Finally, transparent monitoring and data-driven benchmarks can track progress and address disparities, ensuring equitable implementation.

The NEP 2020's 5+3+3+4 model is more than a structural shift; it is a call to rethink education's purpose. By prioritizing skills, creativity, and inclusivity, it aims to prepare students not just for exams but for life. The policy's successes like rising enrolment, foundational learning gains, and global outreach demonstrate its potential. Yet, its challenges like infrastructure deficits, teacher readiness, and federal discord underscore that transformation is a collective endeavor. Policymakers, educators, parents, and communities must align to bridge these gaps. With sustained effort, India's education system can move beyond its current crossroads to become a global model of innovation and equity, fulfilling NEP's vision of a future-ready, inclusive education for all.

'False surrender'

By: Dr. Satyavan Saurabh

The old peepal tree stood silently in the courtyard of the house. The past years spent playing in its shade seemed locked in some old box. The walls of this house had seen many stories - of laughter, of tears, of sacrifices and of neglect.

The elder son had taken the burden of the house on his shoulders from the sixth grade itself. The father's nature was such that he was not used to helping permanently with the housework. He had no big dreams, nor any desire to advance through hard work. At an age when other children are busy with their studies and sports, he completed his studies as well as his younger brother's by giving tuitions.

He saved as much money as he could for his sisters' education. Clothes, books, fees - he was there for every need. After marriage, his wife also became an equal partner in this responsibility. He not only looked after his own household, but also taught his sisters-in-law in their homes and took them with him to coaching classes.

For the small and big needs of the house, the elder brother's salary and his wife's money were used for the house. Even his wife's fixed deposit was used for the house expenses. When his wife got a job, even her entire salary was used for the development of the house.

After many years, the elder brother became stable in his job. He dreamed of a house - built a new house, bought a used car so that household chores could be done easily. But the younger brother mostly used the car. Even when his wife was pregnant, the younger brother would go by car and the sister-in-law would go to work by bus. The elder brother himself would go to work with someone else. The younger brother had gotten a job before the elder brother's son was born. But instead of taking on responsibilities or paying off the old house loan, he continued to enjoy his comforts.

Once or twice the elder son told the parents to pay attention to the needs of the younger son but not to give wings to his desires. But the parents did not consider that the elder son had been carrying the burden of the family for years and had given everything for the house.

The elder brother and sister-in-law always thought and sought something better for the younger one than themselves - from clothes to education and amenities, they always fulfilled the needs of the younger one first. But the desires of the parents and the younger one were never patient; whatever they wanted, they wanted immediately, even if it meant sacrificing the sacrifice and hard work of the elder one.

Both the elder brother and his wife worked and the child grew up in the lap of the father. Even at this time, neither the mother-in-law, nor the father-in-law, nor the sisters, nor the younger brother came forward to help. After some time, the younger brother got married. His wife also worked. Instead of paying off the house loan, the two bought a new car. While the money that the elder brother's wife had received from her parents for the car was also spent on expanding this house.

The saddest thing was that even after giving everything for years for the education and needs of his sisters, he continued to support his younger brother. As if all the sacrifices and hard work of the elder brother had become meaningless like old clothes.

Now the atmosphere in the house had changed. Arrogance had increased between the younger brother and his wife. Words had turned into taunts, and taunts into insults. Sometimes the younger brother's anger would reach the point of a fight. The mother-in-law and father-in-law also remained silent on this. The elder brother was now confined to his own little world with his son and wife. But a strange silence had settled within him - a silence that only he could understand, who had given everything for others for years and had received only distance in return.

The sorrow was not that the hard work did not pay off, but that the people for whom she spent every moment of her life turned their backs on her. The elder sister sacrificed for the education of her sisters, educating them at home, but she also silently stood by the younger one. Even after the birth of the eldest son, no one took care of him - neither grandmother, nor aunt, nor uncles and aunts. The wheel of time kept turning, but one truth remained unchanged - the teenager who had been taking care of the house since the sixth grade still did not shy away from his duty. Only now he had given up hope.

"One night, after years of suppressed pain, he said to his wife - "Maybe it was our mistake... We thought that blood ties were the greatest. But in reality, it's understanding and respect that keep relationships alive." The wife simply held his hand. There was no complaint in her tearful eyes, only determination -

"Now we will teach our son that humanity comes first, relationships come later."

The wind was blowing in the courtyard. The temple bells were ringing in the distance. The house was the same, the people were the same, but the elder brother had changed inside. He had realized that sacrifice does not always result in gratitude - sometimes it only results in silence and distance.

One evening, as the leaves of the peepal tree in the courtyard of the house were falling, the elder brother was sitting quietly with his son in his lap. The son asked innocently -

"Dad, why are you always so quiet?"

The old man smiled faintly, but the pain inside was clearly visible in his eyes. He only said this -

"Sometimes, son, silence is the greatest strength."

That evening, the peepal tree became even more peaceful. It was as if it had also promised that it would always hold the shadow of this house's sacrifice - even if people forget, that story will live on in every gust of wind.

An Afterlife

By: Aniruddh Oghori

From the blazing holy pyre
Her soul wakes to eternity
The sun burned her desires
Her nymphic soul and beauty.
Everyone mourning with tears,
Broken heart and pain all around
While she, free from all fears
Travels to a new fair ground.

By the road of afterlife--
There were stars during the day
The colours of the flowers revived
A bird flew ahead in her way.
There was a brook so clean
Where no reflection turned error;
It had the brimming water, so sweet
That no one could ever sound bitter.

She waits awhile by the brookside
With the mischievous river breeze
Tingling and playing with her calm eyes
Locked to the horizon, and to the ease.
When the leaves rustle to laughter
Her hair flutters with the wind.
There was a bird she chased after,
Running into worlds, never seen.

It was a road long enough;
The traveller could feel it stretch.
Though a songbird and a hearty laugh
May cause the mind to distract.
At the end she finds her tie
Gliding down and perched on a branch
Her face ripped a grin, a wide smile
And it had her comfortably stretched.

But at the end of the path
There comes a diversion,
Where only one she could have selected
From the choices of reality and illusion.
Did she know? She had a board.
She might have missed it in the way.
The time was now for wisdom scored
She has been wondering of it all day.

She now turns towards a new road
While her shadow sneaks to the other one.
She is welcomed with grapes and mangoes
And on the other side her shadow slowly burnt.
She heard the music played by Pan
While her shadow, screaming out her sins.
She touched the early morning with her hand,
Her shadow tossed to the purgatorial ceremony.

And there is a forest in the sky,
Where summer lingers all the time.
She has a world caught in her eyes
To live again, since she had died.
There she found a stairway to a tree
Coloured in white, some gentle leaves
And, if that is heaven, let her be
The shade will give back her peace.

One may meet her when you go--
At a distant land, singing songs of hope
And a fact that must you know,
She had no friends, she has no foe.
On the other hand her shadow
Cry and wail within the darkest glow
You can go, find, and meet her too:
It's up to the road that you will choose.



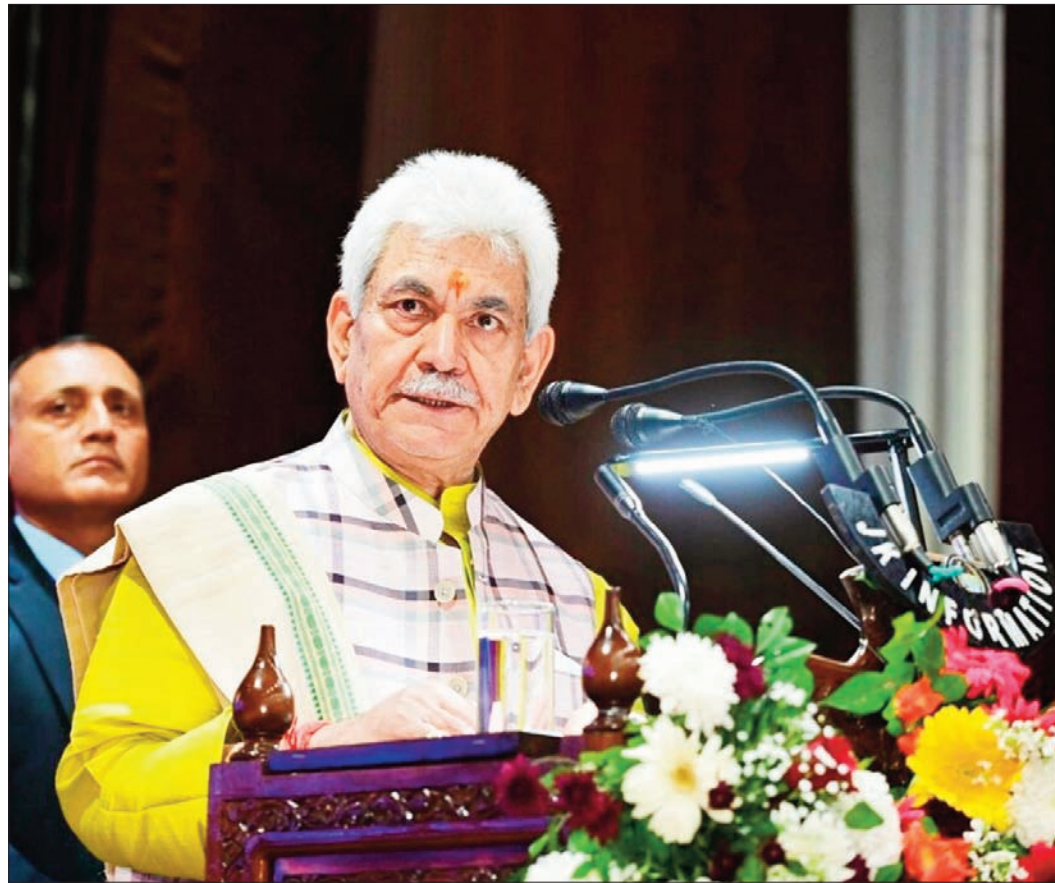
BJP WELCOMES GOVT TAKEOVER OF 200 SCHOOLS AFFILIATED TO BANNED JEI IN KASHMIR

JAMMU, Aug 23: The Jammu and Kashmir BJP has welcomed the takeover of over 200 schools affiliated to the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) in the valley and said the Lt Governor-led administration has secured the future of thousands of students by this action.

BJP vice president Priya Sethi said the JeI and its affiliate Falah-e-Aam Trust (FAT) misused the sacred platform of education to spread radicalisation instead of knowledge.

"By seizing control of these schools, the government has broken this vicious cycle and secured the academic future of thousands of innocent students," Sethi, who is a former education minister, said in a statement here. She said the Ministry of Home Affairs had rightly declared the JeI as an unlawful association because of its anti-national agenda, and the recent takeover of 215 of its affiliated schools is a strong step to put an end to this "dangerous misuse of education".

"This move is yet another step under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to safeguard the future of the



youth and ensure that education in the Union Territory remains free from radical influence.

"Despite being projected as a socio-religious body, the JeI was actively involved in spreading separatist ideology and creating a mindset of hostility against India. Its affiliate FAT-run schools were being misused to indoctrinate young children, rather than providing them with modern and progressive education," she said.

The BJP leader said institutions linked to JeI and FAT were never about genuine education or empowerment.

"They were hubs of indoctrination, trying to create generations detached from the mainstream of progress. Children who deserved modern education, scientific thinking and growth opportunities were instead being exposed to regressive propaganda. This betrayal of trust by JeI and FAT cannot be forgiven," she said. Sethi said such organisations never worked for the welfare of society but rather acted as breeding grounds of extremism, misleading generations of Kashmiri youth and pushing them away

from the mainstream. "By taking direct control of these schools, the government has ensured that no student will ever again be used as a pawn in the separatist agenda," she said, praising the Narendra Modi government for its firm resolve in protecting the nation's future by striking at the root of radical networks. "Modi has given a clear message that education will not be allowed to become a tool of separatism," she said.

Under his leadership, Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing a transformation where schools will now serve their real purpose — nurturing talent, unity and nation-building," Sethi said. The BJP leader assured parents that government supervision will bring transparency, accountability and quality to these schools. "Our children will now study in an environment of positivity and patriotism, without the shadow of radical ideology," she said, adding that the BJP stands committed to supporting every initiative to secure the future of the youth and to build a peaceful and developed Jammu and Kashmir. (PTI)

Parties in Kashmir criticise govt takeover of JeI-linked schools

SRINAGAR, Aug 23: Several political parties in Kashmir on Saturday criticised the J-K government's takeover of the management of the 215 schools affiliated with the banned Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), with many calling it a "betrayal" by the National Conference.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti described it as yet another attack on the institutions in Jammu and Kashmir, saying it is unfortunate that the ruling party is going "against its own people and implementing the BJP's agenda".

"This is another attack on institutions and culture of Jammu and Kashmir. I am linking it with culture and the identity of J-K because there are very few schools that provide regular education along with Islamic education," Mufti told reporters here.

She said earlier, the assets of JeI were taken over and it was banned, but people of J-K still had faith that once an elected government was formed, "such attacks on our identity and institutions would stop".

"That is the reason that the people gave around 50 seats to the National Conference and three MPs, including Ladakh.... But it is unusual that such an order has now come from the government," she said.

Mufti, a former chief minister of the erstwhile state of J-K, said Urdu "is being removed from government offices and school textbooks, and the NC government has remained silent. "This time, it is a participant in the process," she added.

"It is unfortunate that they are going against their own people and implementing the BJP's agenda," she said.

Justice and Development Front (JDF) J-K -- formed by both sides of an under-construction rail overbridge near the Piska station collapsed, causing a major traffic jam on NH 43, an official said.

No casualty was reported in the incident, he said. Waterlogging on NH-39 at Brambe Bazar in the capital also caused a major traffic disruption, while a road leading to Jagannath temple in Dhurwa developed a major crack. (PTI)

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UP CM calls judiciary protector of good governance, announces ₹50 crore fund

LUCKNOW, Aug 23: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday described the judiciary as the protector of good governance and reiterated his government's commitment to its strengthening.

Adityanath addressed the 42nd session of the Uttar Pradesh Judicial Service Association in Lucknow. He unveiled the association's souvenir and announced a ₹50 crore corpus fund for the Judicial Service Association, adding to the ₹10 crore fund created in 2018.

Calling the conference the "Mahakumbh of Judicial Officers," the chief minister said it reflects unity, mutual cooperation, and professional excellence. He welcomed judges, retired judges, and judicial officers from across the state, noting that the session coincides with the Amrit Mahotsav year of the Constitution. "Dream of good governance and a developed Uttar Pradesh can be realized only when the judicial system is smooth, quick, and accessible," he said. He highlighted that UP hosts the country's largest High Court, with benches in Prayagraj and Lucknow, calling it a matter of prestige for the state. He praised the 102-year-old Judicial Service Association for its contributions, expressing confidence that judicial officers will continue to set new benchmarks of unity and efficiency.

Adityanath underlined the importance of timely and affordable justice, informing that in 2024, 72 lakh cases were disposed of in district and trial courts. However, with over 1.15 crore cases still pending, he acknowledged the challenge and stressed, "The faster our pace, the stronger will be the public's confidence. The government is ready to cooperate at every level." Referring to the new criminal laws — the Indian Justice Code, Indian Civil Defense Code,

and Indian Evidence Act — implemented from July 1, 2024, the chief minister praised judicial officers for their swift adaptation. He said the new framework focuses on a robust justice delivery system rather than punishment and will prove a milestone in strengthening both the judiciary and democracy.

He detailed the government's initiatives to strengthen the judicial system, highlighting major allocations for infrastructure and facilities. He informed that the government has sanctioned extensive funds for the High Court, including ₹62.41 crore for residences of Justices in Prayagraj, ₹117 crore for the Lucknow Bench, and ₹99 crore for officers and staff housing.

In-principle approval has also been given for 896 residential units in Prayagraj, along with ₹112.06 crore for a commercial block and ₹44.91 crore for the preservation of the Allahabad High Court's heritage building. In addition, ₹1,645 crore has been sanctioned for setting up integrated court complexes in 10 districts, with work already underway in six. These complexes will house district courts, family courts, commercial courts, and motor accident claim tribunals under one roof.

Reaffirming the government's zero-tolerance policy towards crimes against women and children, the chief minister said that 381 POCSO and fast-track courts have been established. To further strengthen judicial infrastructure, funds of ₹148 crore in 2023-24, ₹239 crore in 2024-25, and over ₹75 crore in 2025-26 have been released with central support for construction of courtrooms and residential facilities.

Adityanath said Uttar Pradesh has fully implemented the Second National Judicial Pay Commission, sanctioning ₹1,092.37 crore for the purpose. (PTI)

5 killed, 1 missing as heavy rain wreaks havoc in Jharkhand

RANCHI/ SERAIKELA, Aug 23: Five people were killed, one person was missing, and several others were injured as heavy rains wreaked havoc in parts of Jharkhand, officials said on Saturday morning.

The IMD issued a red alert of extremely heavy rainfall for Palamu, Garhwa and Chatra districts till 8.30 am on Sunday, while an orange alert was issued for Latehar, Ranchi, Khunti, Lohardaga, Seraikela-Kharswan, East and West Singhbhum districts.

A woman and her seven-year-old son died after their house collapsed in Seraikela-Kharswan district on Friday night, officials said. Eight more people were injured in the incident, which happened in Dandu village in Rajnagar block, they said.

"The woman and her son died during treatment at the MGM Hospital in Jamshedpur. Eight others were also injured as the kuchcha house of one Santosh Lohar collapsed," Rajnagar's BDO Malay Das told PTI.

The incident happened when relatives were visiting Lohar's house, a police officer said.

In another incident in the district, a five-year-old died and three others were injured as the wall of a house collapsed on Saturday morning, police said.

The incident happened around 4 am in Kol Shimla in the Kharsawan police station area, they said. "The wall of the house of one Munna Bodra collapsed. His five-year-old son died on the spot, while Bodra, his wife and their two-year-old daughter were injured. They have been admitted to

the Seraikela Sadar Hospital," Kharsawan police station's officer-in-charge Gaurav Kumar said.

In Chatra district, a couple was washed away in the swelling Siyari river on Friday, police said.

The incident happened in Katghara village, he said.

"The body of the husband was recovered, while the wife is still missing," Gidhour's BDO Rahul Dev told PTI.



A person was also killed in Khairatola village in Pathalgada block of the district in a rain-related incident, officials said.

Incessant rains have lashed the state over the last 24 hours. As a result, trees and electricity poles were uprooted in several places, houses collapsed, and roads and farmlands were inundated.

In Ranchi, concrete slabs on both sides of an under-construction rail overbridge near the Piska station collapsed, causing a major traffic jam on NH 43, an official said.

No casualty was reported in the incident, he said.

Waterlogging on NH-39 at Brambe Bazar in the capital also caused a major traffic disruption, while a road leading to Jagannath temple in Dhurwa developed a major crack. (PTI)

'WANGCHUK, LEH BODY TERM MOVE 'WITCH-HUNT' Ladakh admin cancels land allotment to institute

LEH, Aug 23: The Ladakh administration has cancelled land allotment to Himalayan Institute of Alternative Learning (HIAL) here, drawing a strong reaction from its founder and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk who termed it as "witch-hunt" to suppress the demand of the people for statehood and extension of Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to the Union Territory, Leh Apex Body (LAB), which along with Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) is spearheading an agitation in support of the demand over the past four years, also criticised the decision and said they will not remain silent and any consequences will rest with those trying to "suppress our voice".

Leh Deputy Commissioner Romil Singh Donk in his order on August 21 said the land measuring 1,076 kanal and 1 marla (over 53.8 hectares) allotted to HIAL "stands

eschewed to the State, i.e., LAHDC (Leh Autonomous Hill Development Council) and the Tehsildar, Leh, shall remove all the encumbrances from the said piece of state land as per provisions of the law and effect entries in the revenue record accordingly".

The order said the land in Phyang was given to HIAL on lease for 40 years and it has not been used for the purpose allotted "as no University (as recognised by law) has been set up" to date.

"No lease agreement has been executed in respect of the allotted land and no formal handing over and taking over of the said land has taken place through Tehsildar Leh till date, as per record," the order issued on August 21 said.

Reacting to the cancellation of the land allotment, Wangchuk along with the chief executive officer of HIAL questioned the "motivated" decision and said "it is a

deliberate attempt to harass us on baseless charges" and they will move to the court for justice.

"HIAL was established in 2017-18 and we received a notice yesterday (August 22) that the land allotment to the institute stands cancelled on three points which are baseless that can be proved with data, facts and evidence," Gitanjali Angmo, its CEO and co-founder Gitanjali Angmo, an entrepreneur, social worker and educator, told reporters here.

Angmo, flanked by Wangchuk, countered one by one the points raised by the Leh Deputy Commissioner and said more than 400 students have completed long-term and short-term courses and fellowships over the past five years.

"This is an alternative university and does not require UGC registration but we applied the same on March 16, 2022 and deposited Rs 15 lakh on March 28, 2022... We

met (education minister) Dharmendra Pradhan on March 15, 2023 and he proudly tweeted about our meeting with him," she said.

However, she claimed that on November 5, 2024, when she met the minister again and informed that the UGC and his ministry had kept their file on hold for the last three years as Wangchuk is part of the agitation seeking a Sixth Schedule for Ladakh.

After the formation of Ladakh Union Territory in August 2019, she said they have approached the government time and again for completing the lease deed but "got a response from them that the policy for lease has not been formulated and in the meanwhile, you can carry on with construction activities".

"The land was allotted by LAHDC, but when it was cancelled, it was done by the deputy commissioner without even taking

into confidence the hill council, which is a clear violation of its mandate," Wangchuk said, adding it is a matter of grave concern for the people of Ladakh.

"We are not staying silent and are approaching the court of law to seek justice," he said.

Angmo said the institute has already signed about five Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with universities in different parts of the world and many of their foreign students are visiting Ladakh for their research.

"Our institute has the ability to prove itself as the pride of India and needs whole-hearted support... such institutions should not be sabotaged if the government believes in nationalism and patriotism. We want India to come to the world map on education, a dream which is yet to be fulfilled in the past 75 years of independence," she said. (PTI)

Delhi govt disburses over ₹16 crore to tragedy victims between 2019-24

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: Over the past five years, the Delhi government has extended financial assistance to several people in distress, including those in need for their daughter's marriage, gang rape survivors, victims of fire accidents and families of those affected by riots, drowning, and other tragedies.

According to an official document accessed by PTI, the LG/CM Relief Fund, managed by the Finance Department, supported about 345 individuals between 2019-20 and 2023-24, disbursing a total of ₹16.6 crore.

In the financial year 2019-20, the financial aid was released to 220 people. This mostly included ₹20,000 to people approaching for their daughter's marriage. During the same year, 39 people who were next of kin of the deceased people at the

Anaj Mandi fire incident received ₹8 lakh each as monetary help from the government. In addition to that, 16 people who were injured in the fire incident received ₹50,000 each as compensation from the government.

The fire incident was one of the deadliest accidents in the past few decades at least, which occurred in a bag manufacturing factory in the Sadar Bazar area in 2019, claiming the lives of around 40 people and injuring several others. The fire occurred when workers were sleeping inside the factory.

In 2019, the government also released ₹15 lakh to the father of deceased Ankit Saxena, who was murdered in 2018. Ankit, a professional photographer, was allegedly stabbed to death and his throat slit near his house in Raghbir Nagar by the family members of his girlfriend, She-



hzadi, as they were opposed to their interfaith relationship.

Three deceased from a fire incident in Jhilmil, Shahdara, were also given ₹5 lakh each in the same year. Another ₹10 lakh was released to the mother of a

child rape victim, and ₹8.2 lakh was given to a rape victim in 2019.

In the next financial year (2020-21), family/relatives of the four minor boys, who drowned in the Yamuna river in 2019, were given aid ₹8 lakh. The minors were all aged between 12 and 14.

In the same year, ₹8 lakh was paid to the father of a child victim of a sexual act, and ₹15 lakh to Telangana from the CM Relief Fund. Overall, 45 people were given financial assistance in that fiscal year.

Next year, in 2021-22, the number of beneficiaries was 41. During this pandemic time, the government compensated ₹10 lakh to the wife of a person who died due to a cardiac attack while on duty at Swami Dayanand Hospital in the Dilshad Garden area. A gangrape victim had also received a sim-

ilar amount. One distressed family consisting of seven siblings who lost both their parents due to COVID-19 received ₹1 lakh.

In the FY 2022-23, the government assisted 30 people; one of them was the family of Sakshi, who was brutally stabbed to death by her boyfriend in North-west Delhi's Shahbad Dairy in the middle of a market.

The entire incident was caught on a CCTV camera, where the accused could be seen continuously stabbing and then crushing the victim's head with a concrete block. The family was compensated ₹10 lakh by the government.

As per the report, during 2023-24, the fund was provided to only 12 people/entities; these included four people belonging to the next of kin of the people who lost their lives in the 2020 riots. (PTI)

SIT arrests complainant who alleged multiple burials in Dharmasthala

MANGALURU (KARNATAKA), Aug 23: The complainant who had alleged there were multiple murders, rapes and burials in Dharmasthala over a period of the past two decades, was arrested on Saturday by the SIT formed to investigate these charges, official sources said.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) and its chief, Pranab Mohanty, have questioned the complainant—whose name is not revealed—on Friday till late hours.

Officials said the arrest was made after inconsistencies were found in the statements and documents provided. The SIT is continuing its probe into the matter. The complainant-witness was taken to a hospital for medical examination after long hours of questioning.

The complainant-witness, a former sanitation worker, has claimed that he worked in Dharmasthala between 1995 and 2014, and that he was forced to bury a number of bod-

ies, including those of women and minors, in Dharmasthala.

He had alleged that some of the bodies showed signs of sexual assault. He has also given a statement before a magistrate in this regard.

As part of the probe, the SIT had been conducting excavations at multiple locations identified by the complainant-witness in the forested areas along the banks of the Netravathi River in Dharmasthala, where some skeletal remains were found at sites so far.

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara had recently told the Assembly that action can be taken under the law against the complainant-witness if the SIT finds his allegations to be false.

Stating that till now only excavations have happened, had also said that the probe "hasn't even started", and that only the SIT probing the matter, not the government, would decide on the need for further digging. (PTI)

Tripura Congress alleges BJP exploiting tribals' rights for political gains



HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Aug 23: Former MLA and Tripura Congress President Asish Kumar Saha on Saturday alleged that the BJP in the state is using the 125th Amendment Bill as an election tactic to win the upcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) election by making indigenous people fool.

Speaking after observing TTAADC Diwas in Agartala, Saha alleged that while the Congress had historically laid the foundation for the autonomous council under Indira Gandhi in 1984 and sought to empower it further during the UPA regime under Dr Manmohan Singh, the BJP has failed to act on the amendment during its decade-long rule at the Centre.

"For 11 years, BJP never raised the issue of the 125th Amendment Bill. Suddenly, just before elections, their leaders talk about it. This is nothing but a political ploy to fool the tribals," Saha said.

The Congress leader accused the BJP of using tribal rights as a "vote bank tool" while neglecting genuine development. He cited the recent remark of Tripura Tribal Welfare Minister Bikas Debbarma, who admitted that the government plans to push the Bill as an election issue. Saha underlined that without direct funding, the TTAADC cannot achieve meaningful development, and charged the BJP with prioritizing electoral gains over indigenous welfare.

"Congress empowered tribals in the past and will continue to fight for their rights under Rahul Gandhi's leadership. BJP, on the other hand, only remembers tribals during elections," Saha added.

With the TTAADC election looming, the Congress is attempting to corner the BJP by portraying it as opportunistic and disconnected from indigenous aspirations—setting the stage for a fierce political battle in the tribal heartland.

2 arrested in drug trafficking case

ITANAGAR, Aug 23: Police have arrested two persons for their alleged involvement in trafficking of drugs in Itanagar Capital Complex, an officer said. A police team intercepted a vehicle on Friday night. During checking in the presence of special judicial magistrate (Narcotics) Oli Koyu and an independent witness, police seized more than 10 vials of heroin weighing 2.50 gm, cash, from their possession, the officer said.

Police have seized the items and the vehicle. A case has been registered at Chimpu police station under the NDPS Act, and an investigation is on to trace the wider supply chain, the officer added. (PTI)

Justice must be fair, fast and affordable: Tripura CM

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Aug 23: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said that advocates and judges must work for the betterment and benefit of the people, and that justice must be fair, fast, and at an affordable cost.

He said this after inaugurating the Court of Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate and Civil Judge (Jr Division) at Mohanpur on Saturday. Dr. Saha said that Mohanpur has witnessed massive development in the last three years and this day will be written in golden letters in the history of Mohanpur with the establishment of the Sub-Divisional Court. "Maintaining the guidelines, all the works have been completed. I want to thank the people who were engaged in constructing the building. We have eight districts and district courts, and 15 sub-divisional courts; with Mohanpur, it will be 16. We must go with the

times. Keeping Mohanpur Court as a model, we will set up sub-divisional courts in the rest of the sub-divisions," he said. Dr. Saha also said that judges observe the advocates who come to court to see whether they are prepared or not, and based on their preparation, the judges deliver judgments. "Sometimes advocates come to court without proper preparation, and as a result, judgments get delayed. When people are in trouble, they come to court and wait for their judgment. Advocates and judges must work for the betterment and benefit of the people. Nowadays, everything is available at hand due to the internet. Judgments are expedited in Tripura, and this should continue. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working for development, security, self-reliance, and progress in every aspect. We are now progressing day by day. The judiciary plays a key role in the development of the country," said Saha.

Rajashekhar reviews key development sectors in Namsai, stresses timely execution

HT Bureau
NAMSAL, Aug 23: A review meeting of major developmental activities in Namsai district was convened on Saturday at the Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall under the chairmanship of YVVJ Rajashekhar, IAS, Mentor Secretary.

According to an official statement, the meeting was attended by Namsai MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom, in-charge Deputy Com-

missioner Nang Koliani Namchoom, Heads of Departments, and district officials.

During the meeting, Rajashekhar called upon the district administration and all Heads of Departments to lay greater emphasis on four critical sectors—Health, Education, NABARD-linked initiatives, and Infrastructure development.

He underlined that these areas are crucial for overall progress and

urged officials to focus on practical implementation at the ground level.

In the Health sector, he reviewed the functioning of the district hospital and noted the acute shortage of human resources.

He suggested measures to address the manpower gap and directed officials to work out solutions for ensuring better service delivery to the people.

Taking up Education, Ra-

jashekhar expressed serious concern over poor learning outcomes, particularly in mathematics and languages at the primary level.

He directed the concerned officers to collect data, identify specific gaps, and adopt corrective strategies to improve the situation.

He stressed that building strong foundations in early education would play a decisive role in the district's future human resource development.

Meghalaya progressing from being 'aspirer' to becoming 'fast-mover' state: Official

SHILLONG, Aug 23: Meghalaya is progressing from being an 'aspirer state' towards becoming a 'fast-mover state', making significant strides in agriculture, health, infrastructure and education sectors through centrally sponsored schemes, a senior official said.

Meghalaya Information and Public Relations Department Commissioner Vijay Kumar Mantri said that the state's 74 per cent coverage under PM-Kisan, over five lakh beneficiaries under Ayushman Bharat and PM-JAY, expansion of PM Poshan to more than 7,700 schools, and a remarkable turnaround under Jal Jeevan Mission from zero household coverage seven years ago to substantial progress today is testament to the growth.



"Synergy between the state and the Centre is vital. We have set 2032, when Meghalaya turns 60, as the milestone year to strengthen connectivity, water, power, internet, housing, health, nutrition and education," he said at 'Vartalap', a workshop organised by the Press Information Bureau here on Friday.

Governor C H Vijayashankar, who was also present on the occasion, emphasised that the success of schemes depend on effective implementation and awareness among citizens.

"The Union government has placed particular emphasis on the Northeast, and Meghalaya is receiving due attention in agriculture, horticulture and infrastructure sectors. Media has a vital role in ensuring that people know about these benefits," he said.

Information and Public Relations Minister

Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh described 'Vartalap' as an important dialogue platform.

"Misrepresentation of facts creates confusion, and that is why authentic information is so important. Meghalaya has shown strong performance in health and agriculture, but challenges remain, and the media must bridge the gaps. AI is powerful but dangerous if misused," she said.

Additional Director General, PIB-NEZ, Kripa Shankar Yadav, said the workshop held discussions on centrally sponsored schemes, artificial intelligence, and media law and ethics to benefit journalists and students.

NEHU Registrar S K Dixit noted that media freedom comes with responsibility and stressed the need to revisit Indian media laws in the context of emerging technologies. (PTI)

'Every initiative is aimed at building an inclusive Arunachal Pradesh' Khandu reaffirms inclusive development as govt's core priority

ITANAGAR, Aug 23: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday reaffirmed his government's commitment to inclusive growth and welfare, announcing a series of measures aimed at supporting vulnerable groups, strengthening tribal identity, and promoting women-led progress in the state.

Sharing details in a post on X, the chief minister said, "Arunachal Pradesh is ensuring every section of society moves forward together."

Among the major announcements, Khandu said, the CM's social security scheme has already extended support to over 68,000 elderly citizens, widows and persons with disabilities, ensuring financial security for some of the most vulnerable sections of society.

Under Mission Antyodaya, the government has earmarked Rs 435 crore for the 2025-26 fiscal



for holistic development in rural areas, with a focus on basic services and livelihood opportunities, the chief minister said.

Highlighting the importance of preserving indigenous heritage, Khandu announced the proposal to set up 'gurukuls' for communi-

ties such as the Apatani, Mishmi, Wancho, Tutsa, Sherdukpen and Sajolang, while also ensuring that tribal culture and languages are integrated into the school curriculum.

The chief minister said that the Puroik Welfare Board has been strengthened to safeguard the rights and welfare of the marginalised Puroik community.

On the economic empowerment front, he said that women's leadership is being strengthened through the formation of 11,730 new self-help groups (SHGs).

Tribal products are also being promoted under the brand ARUNima, now made available on leading e-commerce platforms to ensure wider market access, Khandu added.

In addition, the public distribution system (PDS) has been fully digitised, with ePoS machines installed at over 2,000 fair price shops across the state, improving transparency and efficiency.

"From social security to women-led growth and from digital reforms to cultural preservation, every initiative is aimed at building an inclusive Arunachal Pradesh," Khandu added. (PTI)

Railway Board Chairman discusses Bairabi-Sairang project with Mizoram CM

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Aug 23: Satish Kumar, Chairman Railway Board and Chief Executive Officer, visited Aizawl on Saturday and called on Mizoram chief minister Pu Lalduhoma to review the progress of the Bairabi-Sairang New Line Railway Project and other strategic initiatives for strengthening railway infrastructure in the state.

According to an official statement, the Railway Board Chairman was accompanied by Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway, Arun Kumar Chaudhary, General Manager (Construction), and other senior railway and construction officials.

The meeting with the chief minister focused on the significance of the Bairabi-Sairang project, which is considered a landmark step towards enhancing rail connectivity in the Northeast.

It involves the construction of

Once completed, the project will provide direct railway access to Aizawl, the state capital, for the first time.

Officials said the project would fully integrate Mizoram with the national railway network, ease passenger travel, and give a major boost to trade, tourism and socio-economic development in the region.

The project is also seen as the fulfilment of a long-standing aspiration of the people of Mizoram to witness trains reaching their capital city.

According to the statement, the Bairabi-Sairang New Line Railway Project covers a stretch of 51.38 km and is estimated to cost ₹8,071 crore.

Despite the difficult terrain, the project has been described as an engineering feat of Indian Railways.

48 tunnels, 55 major bridges and 87 minor bridges.

The tunnels together extend to a length of 12,853 metres, with the longest one (Tunnel No. 3) spanning nearly 2 km.

One of the highlights of the project is Bridge No. 196, which stands 114 metres tall—42 metres higher than Delhi's Qutub Minar.

In addition, the new line includes five Road Over Bridges, six Road Under Bridges and the construction of four new railway stations at Hortoki, Kawnpui, Mualkhang and Sairang.

Officials stated that the Northeast Frontier Railway has overcome considerable geographical and engineering challenges to bring the project close to completion.

Once operational, it is expected to transform connectivity in Mizoram and contribute significantly to the state's overall development.

DMHPDAAC objects to multipurpose dam projects in Arunachal

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Aug 23: The Dibang Multipurpose Hydro Project Downstream Affected Area Committee (DMHPDAAC) has raised strong objections to the proposed multipurpose dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh, alleging that they pose a grave threat to downstream regions of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Addressing a press conference in Sadiya, the Committee claimed that the Roing Deputy Commissioner's Office had issued directives attempting to suppress their democratic movement, forcing them to shift the venue of their protest to Assam. The organisation alleged that areas of Assam, particularly Sadiya, along with Arunachal's Dibang Valley, are at extreme risk of damage due to the Dibang Multipurpose Hydro Project.

According to DMHPDAAC, both the Central and State governments have been treating the people of these regions as "third-class citizens," jeopardising their land, property, and biodiversity while depriving them of rightful protections and benefits.

The Committee further accused the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) of misleading the people of Assam and Arunachal with false promises in the name of the Dibang Multipurpose Hydro Project.

"We are exhausted with NHPC's fake assurances. Now we are prepared to face any situation against NHPC," DMHPDAAC leaders stated.

The group also alleged that NHPC had already paid a compensation of ₹215 crore to the Arunachal Pradesh government, but claimed that the funds have not been utilized for the benefit of the people of Dibang district.

Tripura MLA urges CM to act against 'fake ST certificate' row in police recruitment

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Aug 23: Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma has written to Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha alleging large-scale corruption in the recent police constable recruitment process, citing a case where a candidate allegedly secured the job using a "fake Scheduled Tribe (ST) certificate."



In his letter, Debbarma named Anamika Debbarma, daughter of Kajal Sinha of Fultali, Kailashahar, Unakoti district, claiming she obtained an ST certificate with the help of a "corrupted SDM and dealing assistants" on the basis of fabricated documents. He pointed out that while the candidate's father belongs to the Manipuri community (unreserved category), she was allowed to contest as an ST candidate by using her

mother's surname and tribal identity.

The MLA said this was a violation of established legal norms in Tripura and India, where caste or tribal identity of children is determined by the father's community. He further alleged that despite such irregularities, Anamika was recommended for appointment as a woman constable by the recruitment board under the ST quota.

"The role of the Chairman of the selection committee of the concerned recruitment board is very much suspicious and frustrating," Debbarma wrote, naming IPS officer Jayanta Chakraborty, Principal of KTDS Police Academy, as heading the panel that approved the merit list.

Debbarma demanded registration of a criminal case against the candidate, the SDM, and officials involved in issuing the ST certificate, action against the selection committee for approving a "defective and suspicious" merit list, review of the recruitment process to detect other irregularities, cancellation of the candidate's appointment and filling the post from the next eligible candidate in the merit list and scrutiny of all caste/tribe certificates submitted in the recruitment.

The MLA also reiterated his earlier stand that tribal women marrying non-tribal men should lose access to ST benefits, claiming such marriages are being misused to extend reservation advantages to non-tribals.

"This incident has raised serious doubts about the transparency of the police recruitment process. The faith of the candidates and people of Tripura must be restored," Debbarma stressed in his letter to the CM.

PM to inaugurate Bairabi-Sairang railway line



AIZAWL, Aug 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Bairabi-Sairang railway line in Mizoram on September 13, Chief Minister Lalduhoma has said.

The railway line will bring Aizawl onto the railway map as Sairang is located close to the capital city.

Lalduhoma made the announcement at a conference of the Mizoram Police Service Association (MPSA) in Aizawl on Friday.

The PM will arrive in the state capital on September 12 and spend the night here. He will inaugurate the new railway line the next day, the CM said.

Lalduhoma said he held a discussion with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw regarding the PM's visit.

Sairang railway station will be upgraded into a world-class facility, and Rajdhani train services will be run, he said.

The 51.38-km-long railway line project is part of the Centre's Act East policy, which aims at boosting connectivity and economic integration across the Northeast.

The new railway line will link Aizawl with Assam's Silchar town and with the rest of the country, integrating Mizoram fully into the nation's railway map.

Engineers call it a marvel as the stretch features 48 tunnels stretching over 12.8 km, 55 major bridges, and 87 minor bridges. Bridge number 196 rises to 104 metres, taller than the Qutub Minar. (PTI)

Naga groups to meet at common ground to pursue shared political vision

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Aug 23: An assembly of representatives of 16 Naga political groups (NPGs), 14 tribal hohos (bodies) from all Naga areas and the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) at Ungma village in Mokokchung district on Saturday reiterated an earnest and unified call that all Naga political groups (NPGs) with the clear-cut support of the tribe hohos will converge at a common ground to articulate and pursue a shared political vision based on the Naga people's historical and political rights.

A statement, called the 'Ungma statement', issued after the meeting stated that the call is in continuation of the 'January 14, 2025, treatise', followed by affirmations and resolutions made throughout 2025.

"This vision is not merely inherited but is continually affirmed through our collective memory, struggle, and aspiration," the statement said.

The meeting was organised by the Council of Naga Cooperation and Relationship (CNCR) and hosted by the Ao Senden, the apex body of the Ao Naga tribe, at rural assembly hall, Ungma.

"Therefore, on this day, Aug 23, 2025, at Ungma village, Nagaland, we, the representatives of the NPGs, tribal hohos and the FNR declare this statement as a binding affirmation of our shared commitment to the dignified wholeness of the Naga people," the declaration said.

The representatives of the organisations present declared that this convergence must be undertaken without preconditions, without the burden of rationalised narratives that fragment "our unity".

"The path towards the future must be unobstructed - one that is a tangible horizon shaped by the courage to reconcile, the wisdom to listen and the will to act," the statement said.

The CNCR declared that it stands as a platform of moral clarity and responsibility where no group will undermine the oath taken today in the name of the Naga people before God.

The statement said this declaration is a covenant, not a mere procedural outcome, as the peoples' collective voice has decisively chosen to rise above fragmentation and division, embracing forgiveness and healing to honour the sacrifices of past generations and to walk together toward a future defined by dignity, justice and peace.

'TRULY HISTORICAL MOMENT': KERALA SPORTS MINISTER V ADBURAHIMAN

World champions Argentina to play FIFA friendly in Kerala in November

KOCHI, Aug 23: Putting speculations to rest, reigning world champions Argentina have announced that they will play a FIFA friendly against an unnamed opponent in Kerala in November this year.

The match will take place between November 10 and 18, and it could happen in Kochi or Thiruvananthapuram.

"The Argentine national team, led by Lionel Scaloni, will have two FIFA friendlies in the remainder of 2025. The first, in October, from the 6th to the 14th, will be played in the United States (opponents and cities to be determined)," the Argentine football association wrote on its official X handle.

"The second, FIFA friendlies in November, from the 10th to the 18th, will be played in Luanda, Angola, and Kerala, India (opponents to be determined)," the statement read.

Kerala Sports Minister V Adburahaman later confirmed the development, saying the World Cup holders, including skipper Lionel Messi, will come to the state in November.

"The Argentinian national football team has announced that the



team will play in Kerala in November during the FIFA window. The team which won the World Cup under Lionel Messi, the whole squad, will play here.

"We thank the Argentina Football Association for this. It's a truly historical moment for Kerala football and the entire sports sector," Adburahaman said in a statement.

However, the statement of AFA did not have any mention of Messi or the details of the national squad.

It may be recalled that the Argentine football association had also thanked their supporters from Kerala

the details.

But Leandro Petersen, Chief Commercial and Marketing Officer of the AFA mentioned on August 8 that the world champions' visit to Kerala was not confirmed.

But Adburahaman downplayed the remarks of Petersen saying Argentina's visit to Kerala would happen.

"Petersen is an important official of the AFA, but only in marketing. The agreement was signed by the AFA president (Claudio Tapia)," he said. But Adburahaman's visit to Spain, which incurred ₹ 13.04 lakh to the state exchequer, had sparked some controversy, but the minister defended his trip saying the state has tie-ups on sporting front with many nations such as Spain, Australia and Cuba.

"The Central government has agreed to our sports policy. The visits included several officials, not just the sports minister. The 13 lakh covers expenses for the entire team," he had said.

Argentina's previous visit to India was in 2011 when they faced Venezuela at the Salt Lake stadium in Kolkata, which the former won 1-0. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: The Supreme Court has asked the All India Football Federation (AIFF) and the Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) to sort out the issue concerning renewal of master rights agreement which has affected the Indian Super League this season.

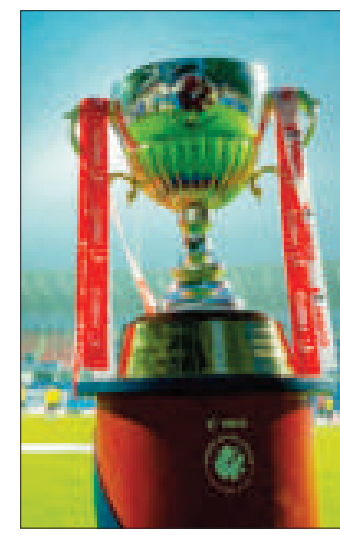
A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi, which heard the matter on Friday, directed AIFF and FSDL to discuss the issue and come out with a solution by August 28, the next date of hearing.

On August 18, the top court agreed to hear the matter involving a row between the AIFF and FSDL over the fate of 11 ISL clubs due to the non-renewal of their contracts with the national federation and the tournament's organisers.

The 11 ISL clubs have warned the AIFF that they "face the real possibility of shutting down entirely" if the impasse regarding the future of the top-tier domestic competition is not resolved soon.

The bench had agreed to hear the plea after amicus curiae and senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan submitted that during the tenure of the contract, FSDL has to honour it by conducting the ISL.

The clubs wrote a letter to



AIFP President Kalyan Chaubey last week, saying the crisis arising out of the non-renewal of the master rights agreement (MRA) between the national federation and the ISL organisers, FSDL, has "paralysed professional football in India."

"Over the past 11 years, through sustained investment and coordinated effort, clubs have built youth development systems, training infrastructure, community outreach programmes and professional teams that have elevated India's footballing credibility both domes-

tically and internationally," the clubs wrote in the letter.

"This progress is now in imminent danger of collapse. The current standstill has created immediate and severe consequences. With operations suspended and no certainty on league continuity, several clubs face the real possibility of shutting down entirely," they said.

The crisis surfaced after FSDL, the ISL organisers as well as the AIFF's commercial partner, put the 2025-26 season "on hold" on July 11 due to uncertainty over the renewal of the MRA, prompting at least three clubs to either pause first-team operations or suspend player and staff salaries.

The letter was signed by Bengaluru FC, Hyderabad FC, Odisha FC, Chennaiyin FC, Jamshedpur FC, FC Goa, Kerala Blasters FC, Punjab FC, NorthEast United FC, Mumbai City FC, and Mohammedan Sporting.

Kolkata heavyweights Mohun Bagan Super Giant and East Bengal did not sign the letter.

The clubs said the impasse will also impact India's readiness for international matches, adding that "without a functioning league, our national team will be severely disadvantaged in upcoming AFC and FIFA tournaments." (PTI)

Shafali, Bist make fifties as India Women A move ahead of Australia

BRISBANE, Aug 23: India A women survived a hundred by Sianna Ginger and Amy Edgar's four-wicket haul to take a good grip over Australia A on the penultimate day of the four-day lone unofficial Test here on Saturday. India A closed the day at 260 for eight, for an overall lead of 254 runs, after opener Shafali Verma (52) and middle-order batter Raghavi Bist (86) made fighting half-centuries.

Earlier, Australia, starting from overnight 158 for five, posted 305 in their first innings to take a slender lead of six runs. Ginger, overnight 24, helped the home side recover from a shaky 158 for five, in the company of late order batters with a gritty 103 off 138 balls.

Ginger and Nicole Faltum added 102 runs for a determined sixth wicket stand as Australia managed to overhaul India's total. Off-spinner Edgar (4/53) kept striking at regular intervals but Shafali first and then Bist were involved in small but significant alliances to keep India going.

The most important among them was a 68-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Bist and Tanusree Sarkar. (PTI)

Talwar fires 2-under 69, tied 11th at Dutch Futures

SPIJK (NETHERLANDS), Aug 23: Saptak Talwar holed two late birdies in the last six holes to ensure a solid 2-under 69 in the second round of Dutch Futures here.

Going along with his first round 70, he is now 3-under for two rounds and placed Tied-11th, up 14 places on the leaderboard from the first round.

This gives him a chance to play for his first top-10 finish of the season. Talwar began from the tenth and shot three birdies and one bogey in the second round.

He birdied the 15th, fourth and he sixth and dropped his only bogey on the second.

Portuguese Pedro Figueiredo (69-66) and American Palmer Jackson (70-65) are in shared lead at seven under par.

Figueiredo shot a round of 5-under 66 on the second day with seven birdies and two bogeys. (PTI)

Arjun-Elavenil pair bags 10m air rifle mixed team gold



SHYMKENT (KAZAKHSTAN), Aug 23: India's Arjun Babuta and Elavenil Valarivan bagged the gold medal in 10m air rifle mixed team event of 16th Asian Shooting Championship here on Saturday. The Indian pair outclassed China's Dingke Lu and Xinlu Peng 17-11 to finish on top of the podium.

The Chinese pair was leading in the initial round but the Indians, who faltered early with shots of 9.5 and 10.1, made a stirring comeback in the later rounds to claim the gold.

The effort meant that both Tamil Nadu's Elavenil and the 26-year-old Babuta from Punjab have now won two gold medals each at the prestigious tournament.

Elavenil had finished on top of the table in the 10m air rifle women's competition, while Babuta had combined with Rudranksh Patil and Kiran Jadhav to clinch the team gold in men's 10m air rifle event.

Meanwhile, the Indian pair of Shambhavi Shrivani and Naraen Pranav grabbed the gold medal in 10m air rifle mixed team junior event. They beat China 16-12 after a dominant show the latter part of the series.

The Indian team had finished third behind the two Chinese teams in the qualification but since only one team from a nation can compete, the Chinese 2 team, comprising Tang Huiqi and Han Yinan, qualified for the final after topping the qualification.

The Indian team totalled 629.5 to finish behind China 2 (632.3) and China 1 (630).

Shambhavi had a series of 105.4, 105.2 and 104.4 while Pranav began slow with 103.7, but improved in the next two series, scoring 105.7 and 105.1.

Another Indian team in the fray, comprising Isha Taksale and Himanshu, finished fourth with a score of 628.6 in the qualification. (PTI)

Greco Roman wrestlers' poor run continues at U20 Worlds



SAMOKOV (BULGARIA), Aug 23: India's Greco Roman wrestlers continued to disappoint at the U20 World Championships as four more bowed out in the early stages of the competition, here Saturday.

The only chance for India to add another medal to their tally is through Anil Mor, who will fight for bronze against Japan's Daisuke Morishita later in the day.

The only Greco Roman wrestler to win a medal at the tournament so far is Suraj, who pocketed a bronze in the 60kg weight class.

Gaurav (63kg) was up against Moldova's Dumitru Rapesco in the qualification round and emerged win-

ner on criteria after the score was tied 2-2 at the end of regulation time.

His pre-quarterfinal also produced a 1-1 result but this time he ended up on the wrong side of the result against Azerbaijan's Tural Ahmadov.

Ahmadov later lost his quarterfinal, ending Gaurav's chances of making a comeback through the repechage route.

In the 77kg, Aman began in a tremendous fashion, shocking Japan's Naoki Kadode 7-0 but came a cropper against Kiryl Valeuski, losing by technical superiority in the 1/8 final.

Valeuski has reached semifinals and if he wins one more bout, Aman will get to compete in the repechage round.

In the 87kg weight class, Rohit fought hard against Romania's Gabriel Edouardo Stan but lost 4-6 in the Qualification round. Stan later lost his pre-quarterfinal, shutting the repechage door on the Indian.

Competing in the heavyweight 130kg category, Uttam Rana made a stupendous start against Dionysios Zougris from Greece, winning by fall.

Rana, though, was outplayed by Ukraine's Ivan Yankovskiy, losing the 1/8 final by technical superiority.

For Rana to bounce back into the contention, Yankovskiy needs to reach the gold medal round. That will open the repechage route for Rana to stay alive in the bronze medal race. (PTI)

National record holder quartermiler Vishal eyes podium finishes in 2026 CWG and Asian Games

NEW DELHI, Aug 23: After breaking the national record, quartermiler Vishal TK now hopes to secure a podium finish in next year's Commonwealth Games and Asian Games.

Vishal shattered the national record in the men's 400m event at the National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships 2025 in Chennai on Thursday en route to a gold.

"I tested myself, I did hard work and if you do hard work it will come through," Vishal told PTI in an interaction.

The 21-year-old athlete won the gold medal with a time of 45.12 seconds, eclipsing the previous national mark of 45.21s, set by Muhammad Anas Yahya in the 2019 Czech Athletics Championships.

"Next year, I have Commonwealth Games and Asian Games and we have to work for it. I am still learning, I will end this season after this competition and the coach is already planning for the next season. My goal is to get medals in individual and relays in CWG and Asian Games," he added.

Vishal's previous best was 45.57s while finishing fourth at the 2025 Asian Championships in May in South Korea where he was a member of India's gold-winning mixed 4x400m relay team and silver-winning men's 4x400m relay quartet.

With his 45.12s under his belt after a

scorching run, Vishal became the fourth fastest Asian 400m runner of the season.

Vishal credits his achievements to his childhood coach, Srinivasan for his success.

"In 2022 and 2023, I was doing 100 and 200 metre sprint then I changed to 400m on the advice of my coach Srinivasan from Trivandrum. It was a very hard decision I made, but I knew I had to work hard for it because 400m is not an easy event. I had speed in the 100 and 200m, the only thing was that I had to work on my endurance," he said.

"It was very hard. In December last year I ran my personal best in the All India University meet clocking 46.43s and then I joined my coach, who made me break the national record. I worked with him 3-4 months off season. I just believed in him. Whatever he told me, I did. I just blindly trusted him and that's why I was able to get the national record in 400m," he added.

An alumni of Inspire Institute of Sports, Vishal also credits his success to JSW Sports, the promoters of the organisation.

"IIS and JSW have really helped me when I was in Europe. The support which IIS gave helped me break the national record. The monthly stipend which they give is helping me," he said. (PTI)

Avani, Sneha make decent starts in Sweden

GOTHENBURG (SWEDEN), Aug 23: Avani Prashanth produced a birdie-birdie effort to shoot one-over 72 and was tied-21st after the first day at the Hills Open here.

Sneha Singh (72) was also tied 21st as the two golfers were the best among the seven Indians who teed off in windy and testing conditions. New Zealand's Momoka Kobori led the way in the opening round firing four-under-par (67) and she was one ahead of seven players who shared the second place.

Among the other Indians, Hitasheh Bakshi, playing in the same group as Sneha, shot 74 and was tied-48, while Pranavi Urs (76) was tied-71st. Amandeep Drall (77) at T-86, Tvessa Malik (79) at T-107 and Vani Kapoor (82) at T-123 were way behind. Avani had a rough start with three bogeys against one birdie in the first six holes.

She rallied well with a string of eight pars. Another bogey on the 15th made it 3-over for her, but she birdied the last two holes for a respectable 72 in tough conditions.

Sneha had four birdies against five bogeys in her 72. The 26-year-old Kobori set the early pace with a steady front nine with one birdie on the sixth hole, but put on an impressive show on the back nine, with three straight birdies on 11, 12, and 13. (PTI)

Shafali has X-factor but selectors preferred consistent Rawal in India WC squad: Reema Malhotra



NEW DELHI, Aug 23: Former all-rounder Reema Malhotra backed the selection of Pratika Rawal ahead of Shafali Verma in India's women's ODI World Cup squad, saying consistency needed to be valued more than X-factor. Since making her debut against the West Indies in December last year, Rawal has amassed 703 runs from 14 ODIs at an average of 54 and her strike-rate stands at 87.43.

In contrast, Verma's recent performances have been way below the mark, making 52, 4, and 36 in three ODIs, and 41, 3, and 3 in the T20s that preceded them for India A against Australia A.

"Shafali is a big name. She's an X-factor

you want in your team. But when you compare an X-factor with consistent performance, I think the captain and selectors rightly preferred the consistent player," Malhotra told PTI-Bhasha.

"Prathika has earned her spot by capitalising on her opportunities. She has shown she has the technique and mindset required to represent India in ODIs," said Malhotra who has played 41 ODIs and 22 T20Is for India.

The World Cup, co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, is scheduled to be held between September 30 to November 2.

Malhotra said India will be strong contenders to land the title in the showpiece,

citing the right blend of youth and experience in the Harmanpreet Kaur-led squad.

"If you look at any past Women's World Cup, this is India's strongest team. It has seasoned players like Harmanpreet, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, and Deepti Sharma, alongside powerful youngsters like Amanjot Kaur, Kranti Gaur, Shree Charan, and Richa Ghosh," she said on the sideline of the Delhi Premier League.

"The team has a great mix of youth and experience. I don't think you'll find a better team for the World Cup. This team has the confidence to win the World Cup."

Despite reaching the final twice, India is yet to win a World Cup. In the 2017 final, India lost to England by nine runs and in 2005, they were defeated by Australia by 98 runs.

But Malhotra hoped for a change in script, courtesy an improved bowling attack and a diverse batting line-up.

"Indian team was always strong in batting but now they have pace options in Renuka Singh Thakur, Amanjot, and Arundhati Reddy, while in spin, there's Deepti, Radha Yadav, and Sneha Rana.

"Sneh has matured a lot in white-ball cricket and knows how to bowl in ODIs. This spin trio will be very effective in Indian conditions," Malhotra opined while admitting that injury to pacer Pooja Vastrakar is a setback to the team," she said. (PTI)

Sinquefield Cup: Praggnanandhaa draws with Lagrave; Gukesh survives Duda

ST. LOUIS (USA) Aug 22: Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out an easy and quick draw with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave while World champion D Gukesh survived anxious moments before splitting the point with Duda Jan-Krzysztof in the fifth round of the Sinquefield cup here.

On a day when all the five games were drawn, Fabiano Caruana of the United States maintained his sole lead on 3.5 points after signing peace with compatriot Wesley So.

In other games, US' Samuel Sevian continued with his solid performance and drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan while compatriot Levon Aronian drew with Frenchman Alireza Firouzja.

Post the halfway stage in this nine rounds event, which is a part of the Grand chess tour, Caruana is followed by Praggnanandhaa and

Aronian and a pack of five players — Gukesh, Firouzja, Wesley, Sevian

and Vachier-Lagrave — share the fourth spot with 2.5 points apiece.

Not far behind is Duda on two points and still at the bottom is Abdusattorov on one point.

Praggnanandhaa had to do little with his black pieces as the Rossolimo Sicilian by Vachier-Lagrave presented zero troubles.

After some routine theory, the players reached a middle game wherein the Frenchman decided against taking any risks and decided to go for a repetition to draw in a mere 26 moves.

Gukesh had another eventful game in a Queen pawn opening with black pieces.

After equalizing easily, the Indian went for his trademark complications but they almost backfired as Duda found some wily manoeuvres leading to a clearly better position according to the computer.

However, a mistake in the middle game cost the Polish Grandmaster

dearly as Gukesh was able to neutralise white's initiative and eventually shared the point through repetition. The game lasted 45 moves.

The players will resume the battle after a lone rest day in the tournament and it could be an exciting finish as there is just one point difference between Caruana and the player placed eighth in the standings currently.

The top four in the overall Standings of Grand chess tour will qualify for the grand finale to be held later this year.

Results round 5: Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 2.5) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Duda Jan-Krzysztof (Pol, 2) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 2.5); Fabiano Caruana (USA, 3.5) drew with Wesley So (USA, 2.5); Samuel Savian (USA) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1); Levon Aronian (USA, 3); drew with Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 2.5). (PTI)